

Increasing School Breakfast Program Participation Market Research Report



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a market research study to examine ways to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program (SBP). The study relies on a combination of methods:

- 22 interviews with district and school staff who work directly implementing the SBP;
- 92 intercept Interviews in six locations across the state; and
- A mail survey of 905 completed surveys with a response rate of 13%.

The study's findings are organized around existing student and school routines regarding breakfast, perceptions of the SBP, messaging themes that will maximize the impact on participation rates, and parent and staff suggestions for program improvements.

Breakfast Routines

- ◆ About half of the families surveyed (52%) reported that the student eats breakfast at home every day as compared to 10% who eat breakfast at school every day. A substantial percentage of parents reported that their child never eats breakfast at school (40%).
- ◆ Staff emphasized the importance of teacher buy-in, particularly for breakfast service in the classroom or using class time.
- ◆ Although awareness of the SBP was high among parents, a substantial percentage were unsure where breakfast is served or what foods are served. Over half did not know if a student would be offered breakfast if he or she arrived late.

Perceptions of the SBP

Parental perceptions of the school breakfast program, as they related to the decision to have their child eat breakfast at school, fall into five domains:

- ◆ **Parental Responsibility** – the idea that it is a parent's responsibility to give their child breakfast and that the breakfast routine is part of the family's well-being and the child's happiness.
- ◆ **Food Quality: Knowledge and Comfort** – The importance of knowing what is served is healthy, fresh, and convenient, and that their child likes the food served.
- ◆ **Logistics of Cost and Timing** – Cost, appropriateness and timing of the school breakfast.
- ◆ **Importance of a Good Breakfast** – Parents' understanding that a good breakfast is important to help students focus on school work and athletic performance.
- ◆ **Socialization and Friends** – The child's desire to socialize with friends during the morning before classes begin and the impact of participating in school breakfast on their ability to interact socially with their peers.

Each of these domains tend to have the strongest impact on parents of elementary school children, with somewhat lesser, though still significant impact on middle and high school students.

Messaging To Increase Participation

- ◆ Messages need to influence the students' desire to eat breakfast at school. Many of the factors predicting a parents' decision to have their child participate involve whether the child likes the breakfast or wants to socialize with friends. The student's preference is important to elementary school parents, however it is a greater part of the parental decision at the middle and high school levels.
- ◆ Parents whose child never eats breakfast at school differ from those who eat breakfast at school on some days, most days or every day with regard to perceptions of the program. Parents whose child eat breakfast at school on some days however, are more similar to those who eat breakfast at school more frequently. It may be most productive to increase the frequency of participation among those who occasionally eat breakfast at school than to attempt to get those who never eat breakfast at school to participate occasionally.
- ◆ Working with the idea of breakfast being a parental responsibility and presenting the SBP as being compatible with the idea may encourage participation among those least likely to participate. Additionally, encouraging parents to join students at school breakfast, incorporating teacher participation in breakfast and generally making the SBP a part of the family breakfast and student learning experience will help increase participation. This is particularly important at the elementary school level.

Improvements to the SBP

- ◆ Parents and staff alike suggested offering more fresh food options, sharing menus with students and families and having breakfast available longer.
- ◆ Staff suggestions to improve participation included mobilizing teacher and school/district support for the program, especially with regard to breakfast in the classroom, as well as implementing additional delivery methods such as Grab n' Go or Breakfast in the Classroom, and improving communication to students and parents regarding menus, nutrition information and timing.
- ◆ Special events (e.g., parent breakfast day) were suggested by staff and have also shown to be successful in other states at improving participation.
- ◆ Staff suggestions for how Maine DOE can help schools improve participation included providing information materials and marketing campaigns, helping schools and districts gain support and engagement of educators through educational materials and opportunities to share best practices, establishing guidelines for timing and logistics of the breakfast service and to help schools secure additional funding for the program.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this research is to provide the State of Maine Department of Education (DOE) with market research data on ways to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program (SBP).

Interviews were conducted with district and school staff who work directly implementing the SBP. Twenty-two (22) staff interviews were conducted, which included 16 Food Service/Nutrition Directors, one superintendent, one principal, one kitchen worker/administrative assistant, one school social worker, one health teacher and one school nurse. Interview respondents were distributed across all sixteen Maine counties.

Intercept interviews were conducted in five locations. A total of 92 Interviews were conducted with parents, often accompanied by their children as they entered or left grocery stores in Augusta, Dover-Foxcroft, Houlton, Lewiston, Phillips and Saco. A \$5.00 gift card to the local grocery store was provided to each person that completed an interview.

A quantitative mail survey provided generalizable data to inform the research. A commercial listing of Maine households with school-age children was purchased, stratified by county. A mailing to 7,447 households resulted in 905 completed surveys. 554 surveys were returned as undeliverable, for a response rate of 13%.

We provide more detail on the methodology used to collect the data presented in this report in Appendix 3.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research was designed to address the question of how to increase participation in the SBP. Specifically, the research questions are:

1. What are the barriers to SBP participation for students and parents?
2. What courses of action are most likely to reduce or eliminate the barrier and enable increased participation?
3. What messages have the greatest impact on SBP participation?
4. What program implementation efforts (e.g. Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab and Go) have the greatest impact on participation?

LESSONS FROM EXISTING RESEARCH

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Other research into school breakfast programs has found several barriers to participation in the SBP. These include scheduling and timing issues related to conflicting events and bus schedules; a concern that a school breakfast program oversteps the boundaries of school responsibility and is perceived to interfere with parental roles, and the widespread belief that the SBP is intended for use by low-income

students¹.

A review of program research in other states revealed known barriers to participation in SBPs nationally. These barriers include:

- Stigma associated with participation
- Timing of participation (e.g., late students, conflicts with bus schedules or early morning activities)
- Impact of teacher attitudes or reluctance to allow class time for breakfast
- Perception that schools are encroaching on a parental responsibility
- Perceptions that the nutritional value of the food offered is poor

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS AND PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

An examination of success stories and promotional information available in other states and national literature suggest a few prominent strategies to increase SBP participation. These themes informed the research, particularly with regard to questionnaire development.

- Universal Breakfast offerings that include all students
- Grab n' Go model and second-Chance breakfast available after the first block of classes
- Taste-tests with small, sample-sized portions during breakfast or lunch
- Public announcements of breakfast availability, results of student polls or taste-tests
- Use of student committees for input into breakfast choices and timing
- Breakfast alternatives modeled on foods found at popular chain restaurants, convenience markets and home
- Use of the school lunch menu to promote breakfast to students, parents and staff

CHALLENGES FOR THIS RESEARCH

This research was designed and conducted between July and September of 2017. It was anticipated that staff and administrators would be difficult to reach and parents may be less interested in participating in SBP research during the summer. In recognition of this challenge, we developed a methodology to accommodate summer schedules that included flexibility in the timing of staff interviews and intercept interviews designed to reach parents and students during summer break with a small incentive offered to participate in a brief interview.

Schools have varying criteria for eligibility and offer varying types of SBP meals. The sample size of the survey for this project did not enable analysis by school or district, but did allow us to analyze the results by school level (i.e. elementary, middle or high school).

¹ Jodi Reddan MS, RD, LD, Kyla Wahlstrom PhD and Marla Reicks PhD, RD Children's Perceived Benefits and Barriers in Relation to Eating Breakfast in Schools With or Without Universal School Breakfast. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 34, Issue 1, January–February 2002, Pages 47-52

NEEDS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

An additional challenge was identified during the intercept interviews – parents rarely knew the type of program that is offered at their child’s school (e.g. Second Chance Breakfast, Grab and Go). A wealth of participation rate data is available at the school level, however these data are not linked to the type of program offered at each school. Information on the types of program offered by each school, combined with implementation practices and school policies regarding school breakfast would enable an analysis of how school breakfast implementation strategies and policies impact participation rates. In this study, staff interviews indicated a need for this information. Informal understandings of best practices are in place, however data on policies and practices for each school would provide an evidence-based assessment of the success of these strategies and their impact on SBP participation.

BREAKFAST ROUTINES

This section presents current practices for delivering school breakfast in the schools, as learned through staff interviews at the school and district levels, and student practices with regard to the program, as learned through the parent survey and intercept interviews.

SCHOOL ROUTINES

Staff interviews revealed that a variety of service delivery methods are used in each district, many times different based on the grade levels of the school (elementary school, middle school, or high school). For example, a majority of high schools offer breakfast in the cafeteria, and have more offerings and a la cart items for this age group. Delivering breakfast on a cart that goes to each classroom individually after the first bell tends to occur in middle schools or higher elementary grade levels only. Additionally, many elementary and middle schools allow children to eat breakfast in the classroom in addition to the cafeteria, whereas only a handful said the same for high school students.

Of the twenty-two (22) staff interviews conducted, only one staff member advised that their district did not offer a breakfast program to students at all. The vast majority of schools offer breakfast in the cafeteria at all grade levels. In this service delivery method, also known by many as the “traditional” service delivery method, students stand in line and pick out the items they want to eat for breakfast. Other service delivery methods discussed include Breakfast in the Classroom, Grab n’ Go, Breakfast Cart and Late Start.

BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM:

“I’ve seen some teachers read during that time, or take attendance while the kids are eating breakfast. They utilize that little block of time to read them a story.”

Many elementary and middle schools allow children to eat breakfast in the classroom as well as the cafeteria. Only a handful of staff members said that high school students eat breakfast in their classroom as well as the cafeteria. Also, this service delivery method tends to be in conjunction with the “Grab n’ Go” service delivery method or the “Breakfast Cart” service delivery method further described below, or can be food students bring with them from the cafeteria.

Several staff members talked about how the younger grade levels in the elementary schools are only able to eat breakfast in the cafeteria, whereas the older grades are allowed to take food with them back to their classroom. This was often associated with the idea that younger children are more prone to leave open containers in their desks or make a larger mess in the classroom.

Several staff members said that students are allowed to take food to their classroom only if their teacher allows it. Some said that teachers generally support students eating in the classroom, especially if the teacher understands the benefits. Others, however, said that teachers and/or school administrators do not support breakfast in the classroom. As a result, the school is unable to provide this delivery method. In both cases, the support of teachers and school administrators are central to the success of the program.

GRAB N' GO:

The Grab n' Go service delivery method provides students with breakfast items that are pre-selected and pre-bagged. The students eat the pre-selected items in the cafeteria or classroom. This delivery method is offered at all grade levels, but tends to occur most often in elementary and middle schools. About half as many staff interviewed said this method was available in their school or schools, as compared with the method of serving breakfast in the cafeteria.

"We're always trying to think of better ways to do it so it's not so cold. So it's not like, 'here's your bag.'"

BREAKFAST CART:

A breakfast cart that goes to each classroom individually after the first bell tends to occur most often at the middle school level, and provides such items as cereal and milk, fruit and juice, and muffins or bagels. One benefit of the breakfast cart is that breakfast can be provided to students who arrive after the bell or did not go to the cafeteria to eat breakfast.

"I get all the kids that come in after the bell and all the older kids that don't want to come to the cafeteria."

"It doesn't go to the younger grades. The teachers didn't like it because the kids wanted to take a couple minutes to decide what they wanted. Teachers who don't have a lot of instruction time these days are not on board with that."

One elementary school provides a breakfast cart to individual classrooms only in the higher grade levels. Similar to serving breakfast in the classroom, teacher support for the breakfast cart can be an important factor in the school's decision. The distraction of serving breakfast from a cart in the hallway and the time taken out of the teachers' instruction time are cited as reasons for the lack of teacher support.

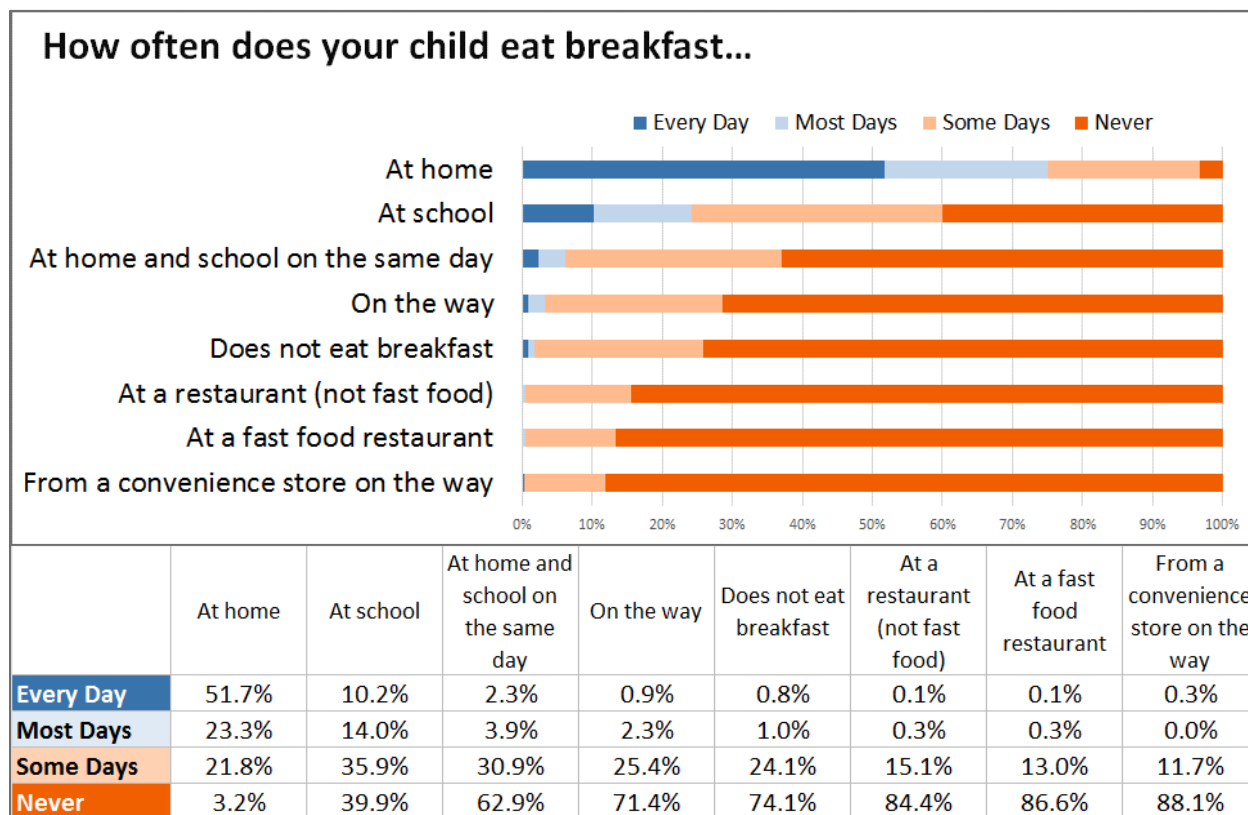
LATE START:

Some schools have extended hours in the cafeteria for students who arrive to school after the first bell. Several staff members said that students who come in late are allowed to eat breakfast no matter the established policy or scheduled breakfast hours. Many times this is handled informally or on a case-by-case basis. For example a teacher or school nurse may take the student to the cafeteria to select breakfast items. The student would then eat in the classroom or nurses office, depending on the teacher's policy for allowing food in the classroom.

STUDENT ROUTINES

Most students eat breakfast at home or at school, with few eating breakfast both at home and at school.

About half of the families surveyed reported that the student eats breakfast at home every day (51.7%) as compared to 10.2% who eat breakfast at school every day. A substantial percentage of parents reported that their child never eats breakfast at school (39.9%).



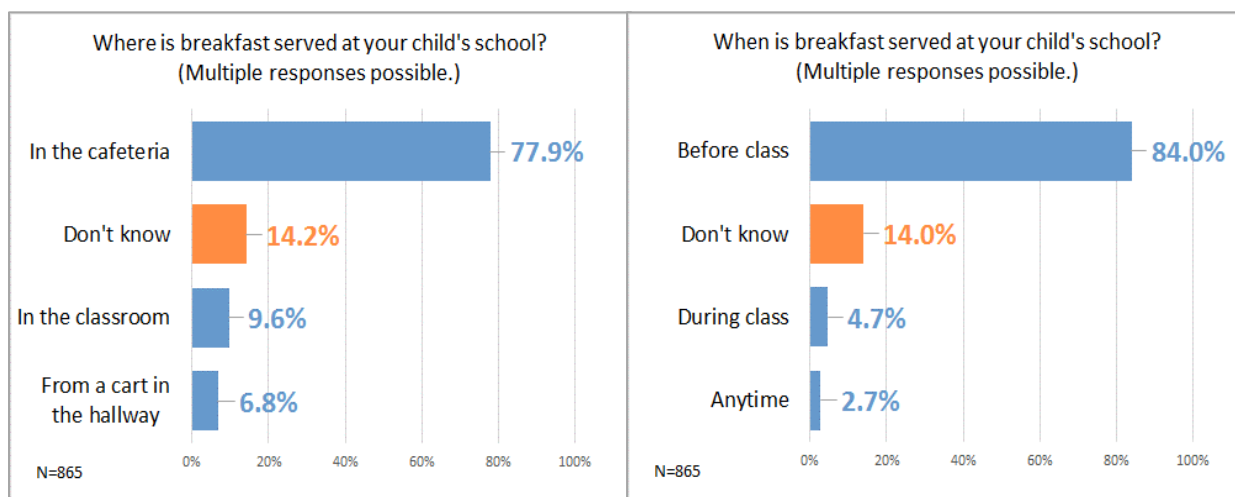
AWARENESS OF THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

The vast majority of parents contacted through the intercept interviews were aware of the school breakfast program. However, parents who were with their children at the time of the interview often asked their child for help answering questions such as where (cafeteria or hallway cart) or when (before class or during) breakfast is served. Parents who were not with their children were most often unfamiliar with service delivery methods like Grab n'Go or Breakfast in the Classroom.

One in seven respondents surveyed (14%) stated that they did not know when or where breakfast is served at their child's school. During the intercept interviews, "in the cafeteria" and "before class" were the most common guesses of parents at the time of the interview.

Three out of four (77%) intercept respondents said they were aware of the school breakfast program. A vast majority (80%) said that their child eats breakfast in the cafeteria. Less than one in ten said that their child eats breakfast in the classroom or that the school's service delivery method was Grab n' Go (8.7% and 7.6%, respectively). Only two of the intercept respondents said that their child was able to eat breakfast in either the cafeteria or classroom.

A majority (77.9%) of survey respondents said that their child eats breakfast in the cafeteria and that breakfast is served before class (84%). One in seven (14.2%) do not know where breakfast is served at their child's school and 14% do not know when breakfast is served at the school. Less than one in ten respondents said that their child eats breakfast in the classroom (9.6%) or is served from a cart in the hallway (6.8%). Very few respondents said that their child is able to eat breakfast during class (4.7%) or anytime (2.7%).

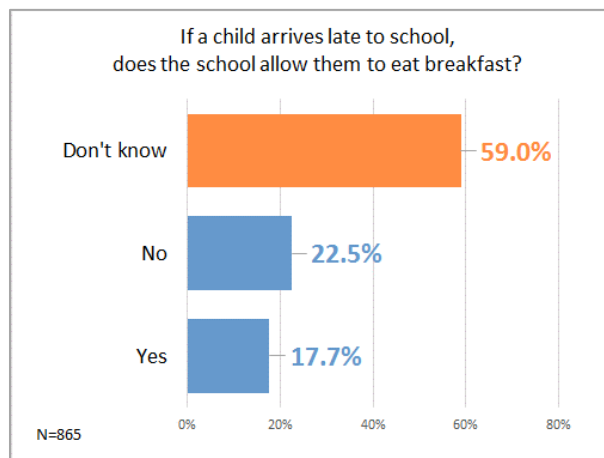


TIMING OF SCHOOL BREAKFAST

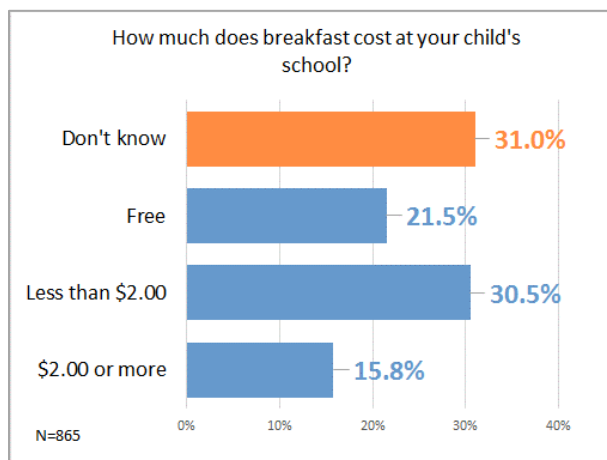
Over half of survey respondents (59%) did not know if the schools allows their child to eat breakfast if they arrive late to school.

Almost one in four (22.5%) said that the school will not allow their child to eat breakfast if they arrive late, with about one in six (17.7%) saying the school will allow their child to eat breakfast if they arrive late.

If parents believe their student will not be served breakfast if they arrive late, they are likely to make sure they have breakfast before leaving home.



COST



About one in three (31%) survey respondents did not know how much the breakfast cost at their child school. About half reported that breakfast at their child's school is free or cost less than \$2.00. A little more than one in seven (15.8%) said that breakfast at their child's school cost more than \$2.00.

PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL BREAKFAST

The survey was designed to collect data on a wide range of questions regarding parent perceptions of the SBP. In order to examine the attitudes and beliefs surrounding the SBP program, factor analysis was performed.

Factor analysis is a way of identifying common themes within a data set. The procedure groups variables together that are similar with regard to an “outcome variable”, in this case school breakfast participation. Factor analysis groups questions that are similar to each other and most dissimilar to the other groups.

The survey data suggest that parental perceptions of the school breakfast program, as they related to the decision to have their child eat breakfast at school, fall into five domains:

1. **Parental Responsibility** – the idea that it is a parent’s responsibility to give their child breakfast and that the breakfast routine is part of the family’s well-being and the child’s happiness.
2. **Food Quality: Knowledge and Comfort** – The importance of knowing that what is served is healthy, fresh, and convenient, and that their child likes the food served.
3. **Logistics of Cost and Timing** – Cost, appropriateness and timing of the school breakfast.
4. **Importance of a Good Breakfast** – Parents’ understanding that a good breakfast is important to help students focus on school work and athletic performance.
5. **Socialization and Friends** – The child’s desire to socialize with friends during the morning before classes begin and the impact of participating in school breakfast on their ability to interact socially with their peers.

The following chart shows each theme with its associated component scores. The component score is a measure of how strongly each variable is associated with each theme. Each variable is assigned to the component for which it has the highest score, and then the component is named for the concept that becomes evident when comparing the variables and their meanings. Some variables may have comparable scores for several of the components. If so, the most conceptually suitable component is selected. In the graphic below, each variable’s high score is shaded in dark blue, with the remaining component scores shown in light blue.

The scores are on a scale of negative one to positive one. A score of one, positive or negative, indicates the strongest possible relationship and zero indicates no relationship. Negative scores are indicative of an inverse relationship.

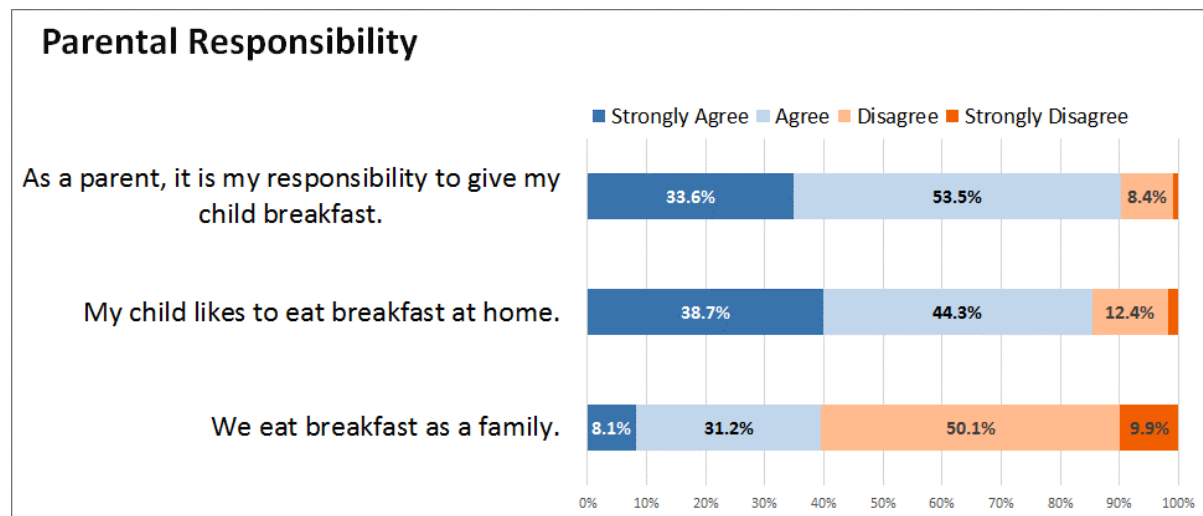
Components are designed to group the most similar variables and maximize the difference between components. This makes a mutually exclusive and maximally exhaustive arrangement.

In the remainder of this section, each of the five components are examined individually.

Item	Component				
	1 Parental Responsibility	2 Knowledge and Comfort	3 Logistics	4 Focus and Performance	5 Socialization
1. Parental Responsibility					
My child likes to eat breakfast at home.	0.69	-0.08	0.07	0.08	0.07
We eat breakfast as a family.	0.65	0.08	0.16	-0.03	0.02
As a parent, it is my responsibility to give my child breakfast.	0.63	0.10	0.07	0.09	-0.08
2. Knowledge and Comfort					
The school breakfast is fresh.	0.13	0.86	-0.09	0.04	-0.04
The school breakfast is healthy.	0.07	0.84	-0.11	0.06	0.09
School breakfast is convenient.	-0.15	0.59	-0.23	0.21	-0.12
My child likes the food served at school breakfast.	-0.06	0.50	-0.02	0.21	-0.44
I know what they serve for breakfast at school.	0.03	0.44	-0.17	0.03	-0.01
3. Logistics: Cost and Timing					
Having breakfast at school is too expensive.	0.05	-0.15	0.72	0.02	-0.17
School breakfast is for low-income families.	0.09	-0.17	0.71	-0.07	0.08
My child arrives after breakfast is served at school.	-0.01	-0.10	0.64	0.04	0.18
School breakfast starts too early.	-0.30	-0.10	0.62	-0.07	0.24
I don't have time to prepare breakfast in the morning.	-0.75	0.01	0.25	-0.06	0.02
My child doesn't have time to eat at home.	-0.70	0.05	0.19	-0.01	-0.03
4. Focus and Performance					
A good breakfast helps my child focus on their schoolwork.	0.13	0.17	-0.01	0.91	-0.11
A good breakfast helps my child's performance in sports.	0.08	0.14	-0.04	0.93	0.04
5. Socialization					
My child chooses to play with friends instead of eating school breakfast.	-0.03	0.06	0.16	0.02	0.80
My child likes to eat breakfast at school to spend time with friends.	-0.30	0.37	0.17	0.08	0.40
My child would be embarrassed to eat breakfast at school.	-0.07	-0.08	0.49	-0.03	0.55

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

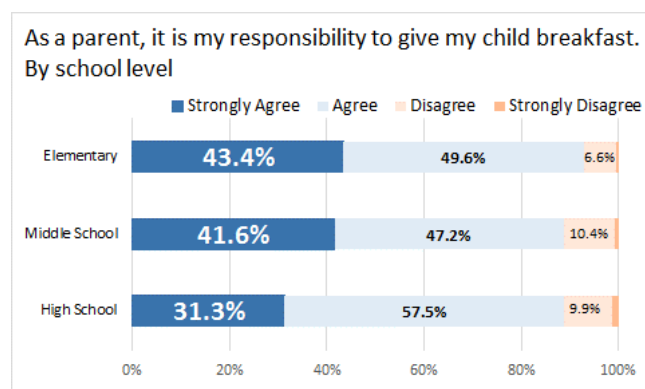
Overwhelmingly parents believe that it is their responsibility as a parent to give their child breakfast with almost nine in ten (87.1%) survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Five out of six (83%) agree or strongly agree that their child likes to eat breakfast at home. Two out of five (39.3%) survey respondents stated that they eat breakfast together as a family.



Of the thirty percent (30%) of intercept respondents who said that their child did not eat breakfast at school, their top reason was because their child had already eaten at home. Many staff members also stated that one reason that students do not participate is because they already had breakfast at home. A few intercept respondents specifically emphasized that they know what their child is eating if they eat breakfast at home.

The high percentage of strongly agree responses suggests that belief in a parental responsibility to provide breakfast is very strong. The Department should consider messages that work with these beliefs, such as those that present the SBP as fulfilling the parental responsibility. It will be important that school breakfast participation is not seen as an alternative to fulfilling parental responsibility.

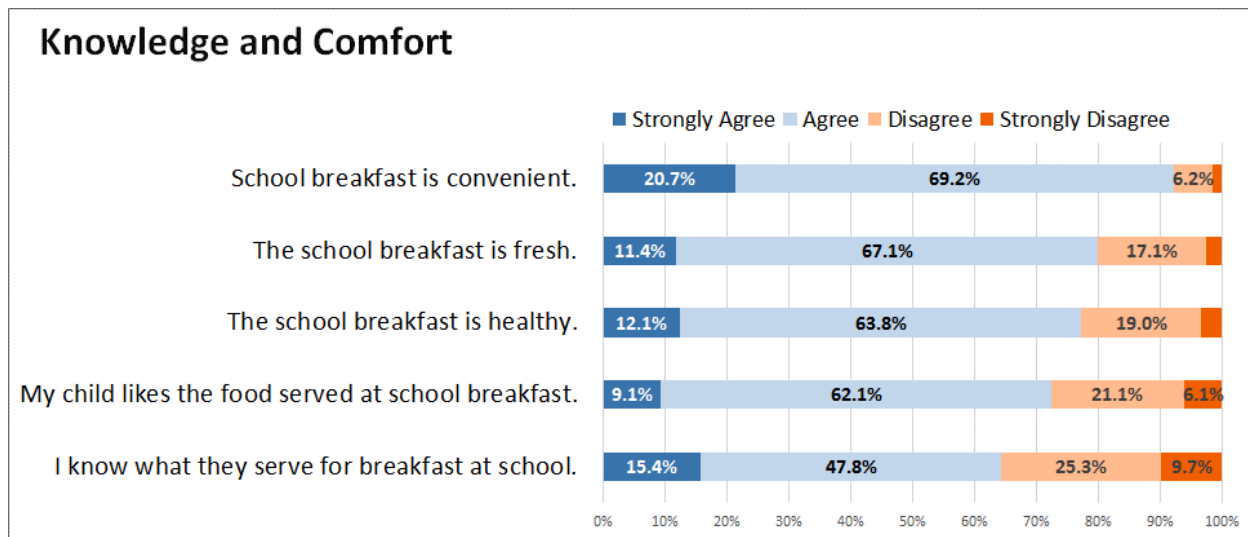
PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY BY GRADE LEVEL



Elementary and middle school parents are more likely to strongly agree that it is their responsibility to give their child breakfast (43.4% and 41.6% respectively) than high school parents (31.3%).

FOOD QUALITY: KNOWLEDGE AND COMFORT

The vast majority of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that school breakfast is convenient (89.9%), fresh (78.5%) and healthy (75.9%). Seven out of ten (71.2%) survey respondents said that their child likes the food that is served at school breakfast. A little more than three in five (63.2%) said that they know what the school serves their child for breakfast.



We found similar feelings among the intercept respondents. When asked about the benefits of the school breakfast program, many talked about how the program provides a healthy, nutritious meal for their child to eat. A couple emphasized how much their child likes the breakfast at school. Only one intercept respondent believed that the breakfast served at school was unhealthy.

Many also remarked that knowing the school will provide breakfast to their child provides them with more time in the morning and the family feels less rushed. Only one intercept respondent stated that school breakfast is served too early and is not convenient.

“When we started getting the healthier food, when our school nutrition program switched to whole grain, fruit was offered all the time; I would say 80% of the kids in my homeroom get the full deal. And for the kids that don’t, it’s usually because they already had breakfast at home.”

Similarly, many staff members cited convenience as a major reason that students participate in the school breakfast program. Breakfast at school provides food for students running late in the morning and allows families to have more time. One staff member noted how their community is dominated by fishermen that leave early in the morning. Others talked about long bus rides and the time constraints many families’ face in the morning.

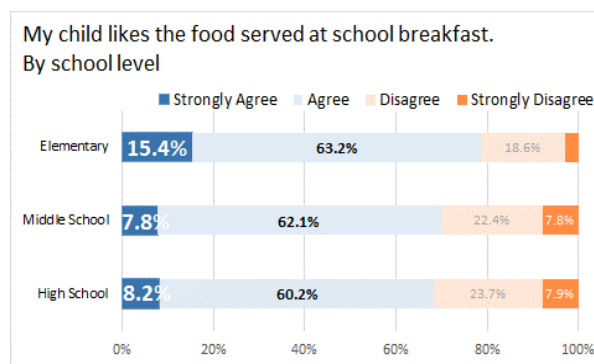
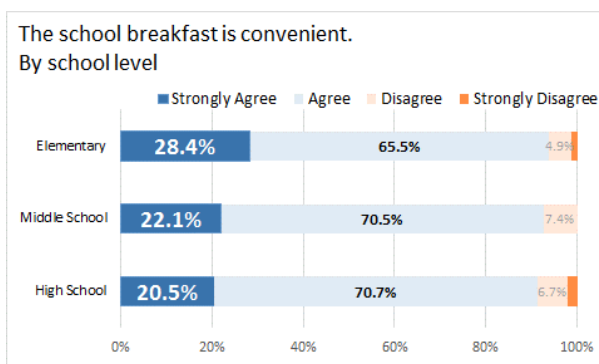
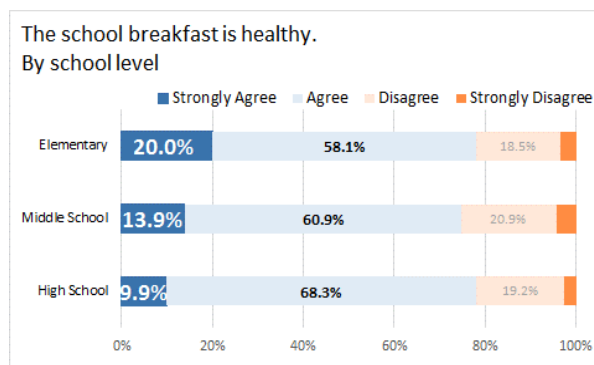
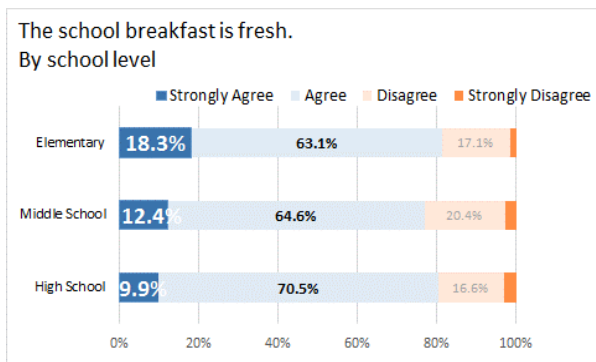
“The kids come to school at 7:30 in the morning and sometimes they are on the bus for an hour, so they’re leaving the house at 6:30 and there is just no time to get children up and dressed and out the door.”

Additionally, a couple intercept respondents stated that their child is not hungry first thing in the morning, and school breakfast provides their child with the opportunity to eat later. Several intercept respondents disclosed that they feel less worried that their child will be hungry since they know their child will have breakfast at school.

FOOD QUALITY BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Elementary school parents are more likely to strongly agree that school breakfast is healthy, fresh and convenient. This belief diminishes gradually with the school level of the child so that parents of elementary school children are most likely to strongly agree, followed by parents of middle school children, while parents of high school age children agree least strongly.

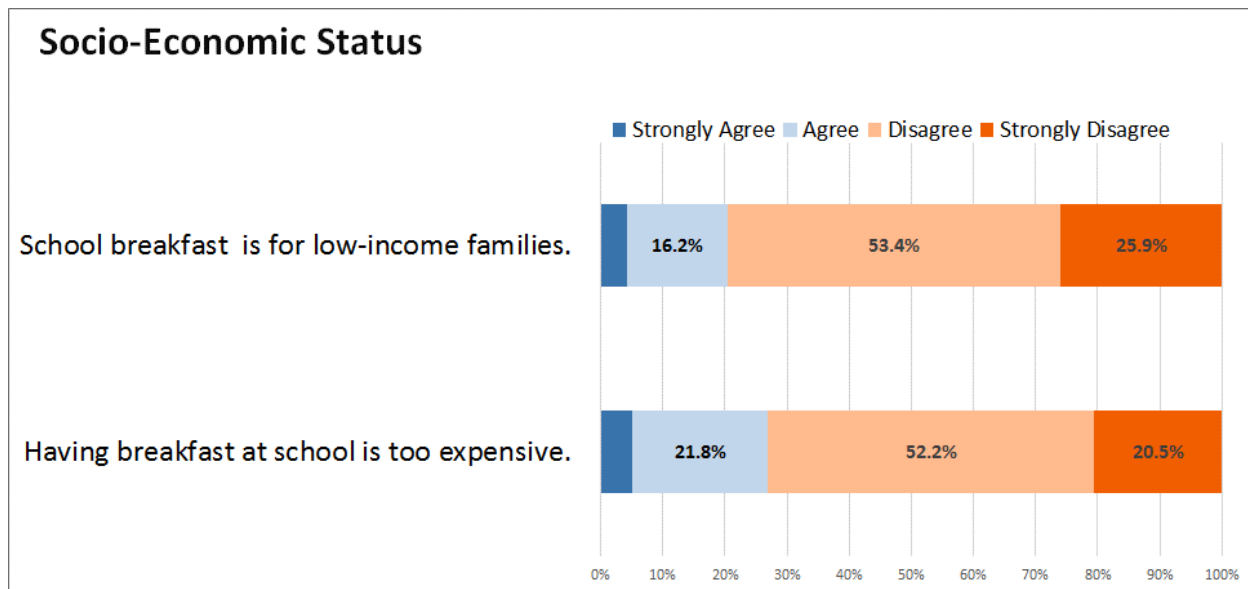
Elementary school parents are more likely to say that their child likes the food served at school breakfast (15.4%) compared to middle and high school parents (7.8% and 8.2% respectively.)



The small percentage of parents at elementary, middle and high school levels who strongly agree that breakfast is fresh, healthy or well-liked by their child is indicative of a low level of enthusiasm for the quality of food served at school breakfast even though the majority are in agreement that the food is fresh, healthy and that their child likes it. A much higher percentage at each level strongly agrees that school breakfast is convenient, however this factor also diminishes with school level.

LOGISTICS: COST

Most respondents understand that the SBP is available to all students regardless of income and perceive the SBP as being an affordable or free option. A majority (79.3%) of survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that school breakfast is for low-income families. A little more than seven out of ten (72.7%) survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that having breakfast at school is too expensive.



Several of the intercept respondents stated that they are low income and breakfast being provided at school for their child expands their household budget. A couple of the intercept respondents whose children do not eat breakfast at school acknowledged the financial help that breakfast at school would provide to their household.

POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

When asked why they believed students participate in the school breakfast program, a majority of the staff members talked about how breakfast at school provides students with access to food. Some noted this in conjunction with breakfast being unavailable at home, and the high prevalence of food insecurity and poverty in their community. Many staff members reiterated that breakfast at school provides hungry students with food.

Several staff members talked about their involvement in universal breakfast and lunch, or their “CEP status”, where all students are able to eat breakfast for free. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) provides an alternative approach for offering school meals to local educational agencies and schools in low income areas instead of collecting individual applications for free and reduced price meals.

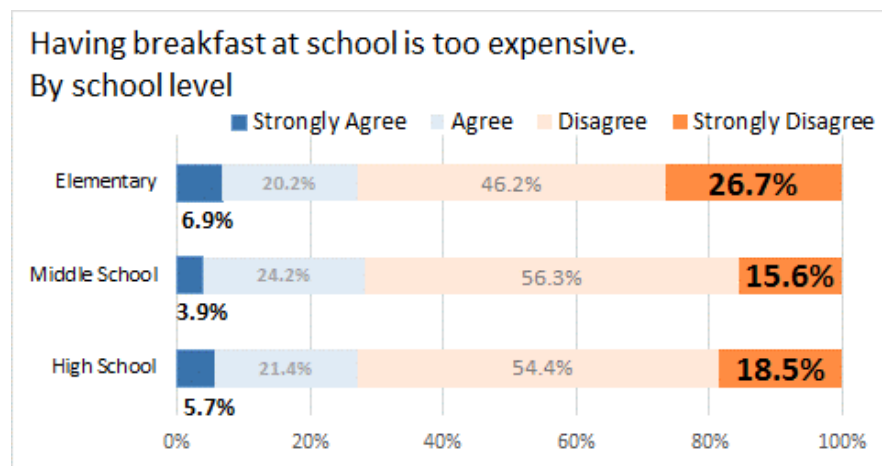
“For us, we have a community that has a very high poverty rate and school provides food security, which is probably one of the biggest motivators for kids to participate in the program.”

“We decided to participate in the CEP for four years to enable our students to eat free lunch and breakfast. And our participation increased monthly at least 37-38% for both breakfast and lunch. Once we did CEP where everybody eats free, our participation grew.”

The CEP allows schools that predominantly serve low-income children to offer free, nutritious school meals to all students through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. The CEP uses information from other programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Temporary Assistance Program for Needy Families (TANF) instead of traditional paper applications.

THE COST FACTOR

Several staff members noted that cost may be a factor of nonparticipation in the schools that do not have free breakfast, especially when parents also pay for school lunch meals. The survey did not assess whether respondents’ children receive free meals, however less than one in three parents agreed or strongly agreed that having breakfast at school is too expensive. Elementary school parents are more likely to disagree that school breakfast is too expensive (26.7%) compared to middle and high school parents (15.6% and 18.5% respectively).

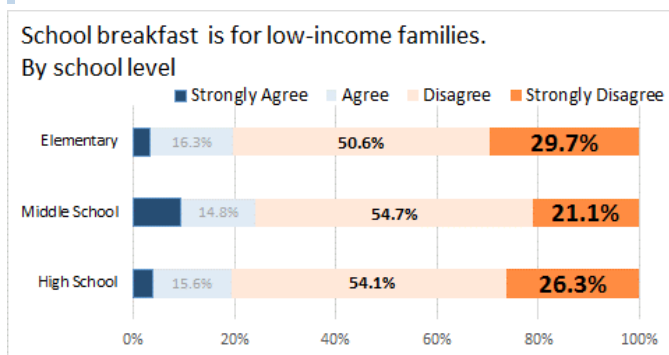


“When you add the \$1.50 to the \$3.00 or \$2.75 [lunch] meal, times 5 days a week... When you’re a working parent, that money really adds up.”

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

One staff member talked about how parents may just not know about the school breakfast program and if they are eligible for free or reduced price. This staff member expressed concern that the paperwork may be too difficult for many parents to complete without assistance.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROGRAM BY GRADE LEVEL

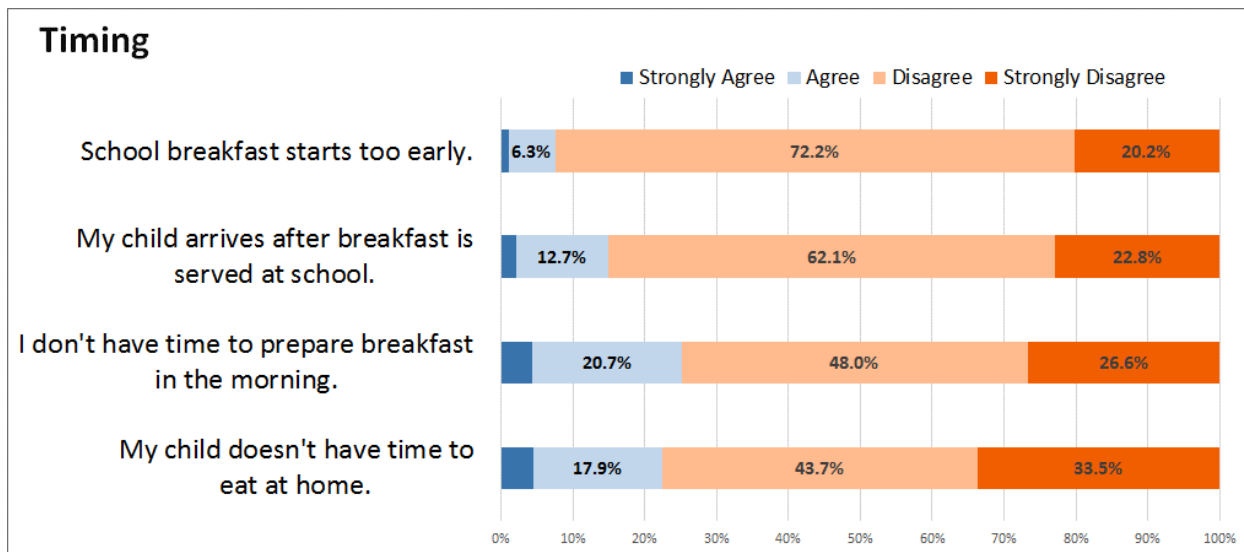


Almost one in three (29.7%) of elementary school parents strongly disagree that school breakfast is for low-income families, with a little more than a quarter of high school parents (26.3%) and one in five middle school parents (21.1%) also strongly disagreeing with this statement.

LOGISTICS: TIMING OF SCHOOL BREAKFAST

A vast majority (92.4%) of survey respondents disagree with the statement that school breakfast starts too early. Similarly, over four out of five (84.9%) survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that their child arrives after breakfast is served at school.

A substantial percentage of parents struggle with the time needed for preparing and serving breakfast, One out of four (25.4%) survey respondents stated that they do not have time to prepare breakfast and just over one in five (22.8%) stated that their child does not have time to eat breakfast at home.

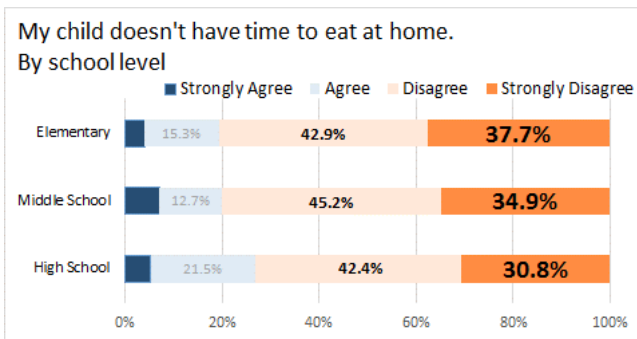


Many staff members expressed a different view however regarding the timing of school breakfast. Staff expressed concern that many students do not have time to eat breakfast once they arrive at school. Several staff said that students wait in line for breakfast and may feel too rushed to participate. Additionally, as shown previously, over half of survey respondents (59%) did not know if the school allows their child to eat breakfast if they arrive late.

Several staff linked their schools' low participation rates to this lack of time and to teachers' willingness

to accept students coming to class late or eating in the classroom.

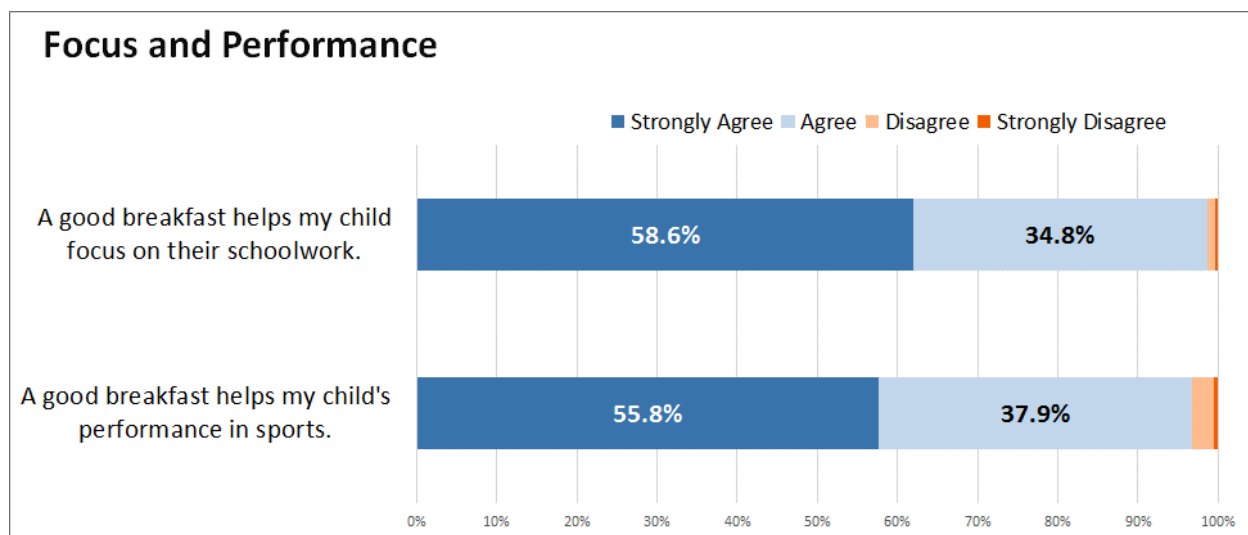
High school parents are more likely to agree that their child does not have time to eat breakfast at home as compared to elementary and middle school parents. Elementary school parents are more likely to strongly disagree with the statement that their child does not have time to eat at home (37.7% vs. 34.9% and 30.8%, respectively).



“There are two things controlling [lack of participation]. How the student feels about getting in line, waiting in line and trying to eat. And then from the other end, the teacher, whether they are accepting of the student who is maybe a little bit late to class because they came to the cafeteria for breakfast.”

IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD BREAKFAST: FOCUS AND PERFORMANCE

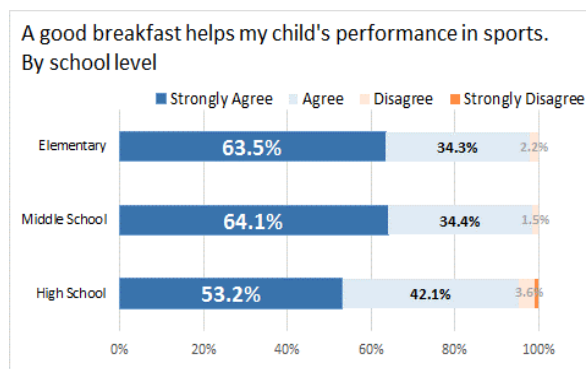
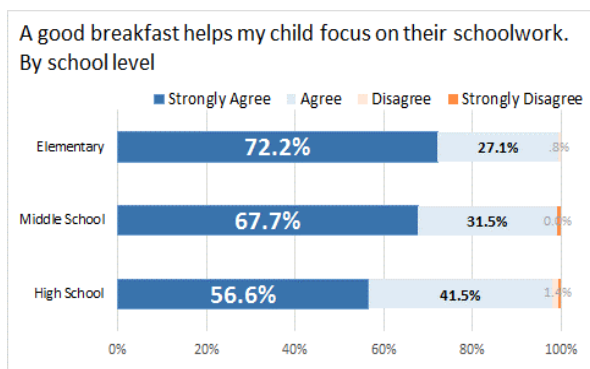
Parents know the benefits of their child eating a good breakfast. One in ten survey respondents agree or strongly agree that a good breakfast helps their child focus on schoolwork (93.4%) and that it helps their child's performance in sports (93.7%).



When asked about the benefits of the school breakfast program, many of the intercept respondents emphasized that having breakfast at schools helps their child focus and learn better while at school. One staff member also emphasized the educational benefits of students eating breakfast, stating that students who have breakfast study better and are more prepared. Thus, parents overwhelmingly understand the benefits of having their child eat breakfast, for both academic and sports performance. The question for many parents however, is whether school breakfast is the best way to achieve this goal.

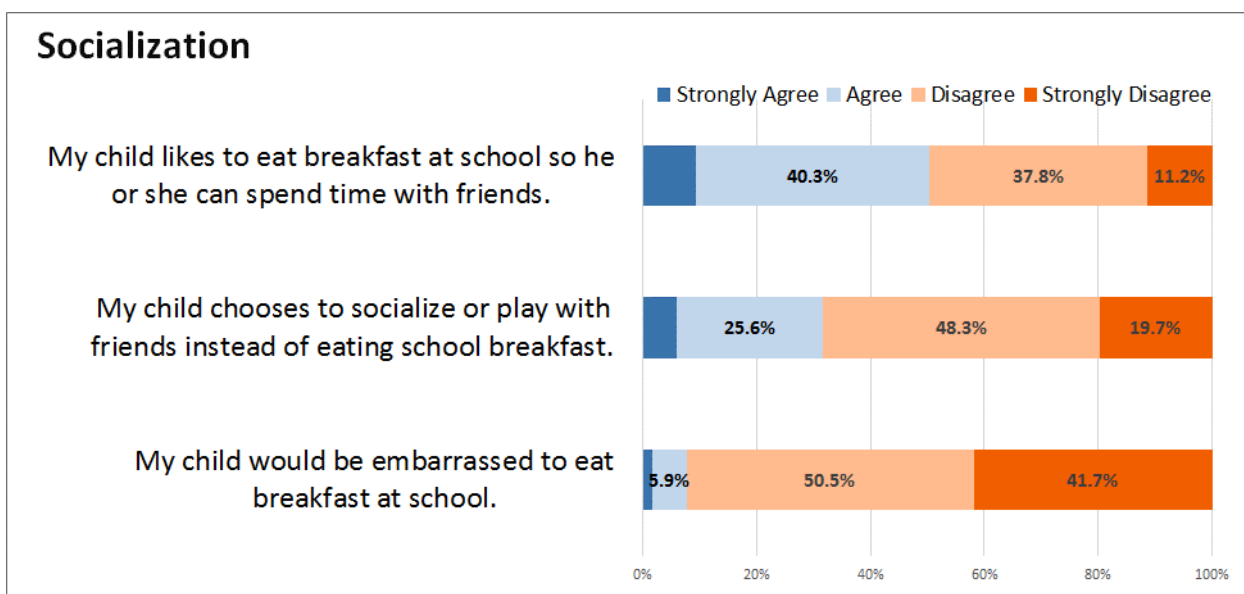
FOCUS AND PERFORMANCE BY SCHOOL LEVEL

Elementary and middle school parents are more likely to strongly agree that a good breakfast helps their child focus on schoolwork (72.2% and 67.7%) and helps with their child's performance in sports (63.5% and 64.1%) when compared to high school parents.



SOCIALIZATION AND FRIENDS

Half (51%) of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that their child likes to eat breakfast at school so he or she can spend time with friends. About one in three (32%) say that their child chooses to socialize or play with friends instead of eating school breakfast. Contrary to the widespread belief and national findings that stigma hinders school breakfast participation, less than one in ten Maine parents (7.8%) say that their child would be embarrassed to eat breakfast at school.



SOCIALIZING WITH FRIENDS

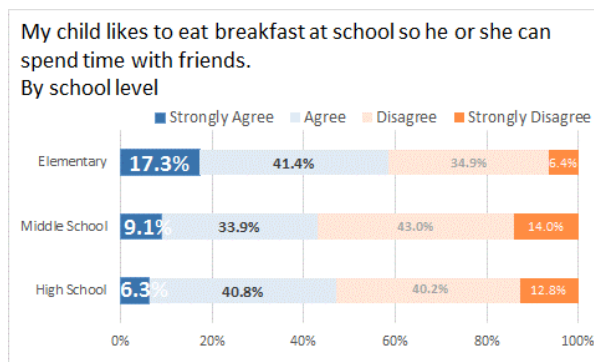
Several intercept respondents believed that socializing with other students while having breakfast was a benefit for their child. Of the intercept respondents whose child does not eat breakfast at school, one

acknowledged that having breakfast would provide her child with a chance to socialize with friends.

Staff members found that the social factor of having breakfast of school was a reason that students participated. One noted the “family-type atmosphere” for students who have breakfast in the classroom.

SOCIALIZING WITH FRIENDS BY GRADE LEVEL

Elementary school parents are almost twice as likely to strongly agree that their child likes to eat breakfast at school so he or she can spend time with friends (17.3%) compared to middle school and high school parents (9.1% and 6.3% respectively).



COMPETITION FOR PROVIDING BREAKFAST TO STUDENTS

Many staff members explained that younger students are given the choice between eating breakfast and playing on the playground, and this choice could lead to lower participation rates among elementary school students. These staff members explained that students do not want to miss time with their friends to eat breakfast, and that the choice between playing with friends on the playground and eating breakfast creates unnecessary competition. As one staff member lamented, “That’s a hard choice for a kid, especially at elementary age.”

Several staff members also noted the competition from other breakfast providers such as Dunkin Donuts or McDonald’s, especially at the high school level.

“At the high school level, we’re right next to a Dunkin Donuts so it’s almost seen as the cool thing to do, get your breakfast there and come in with your coffee and your donut or your bagel sandwich or whatever.”

SOCIAL STIGMA

We talked to many staff members about the stigma associated with eating breakfast at school. Staff members explained that there are two types of stigma, one related to poverty and the other to the school food. First, there is a stigma that students that eat breakfast at school are a “free or reduced student”, and therefore poor. Second, there is the stigma that eating school food is not “cool.”

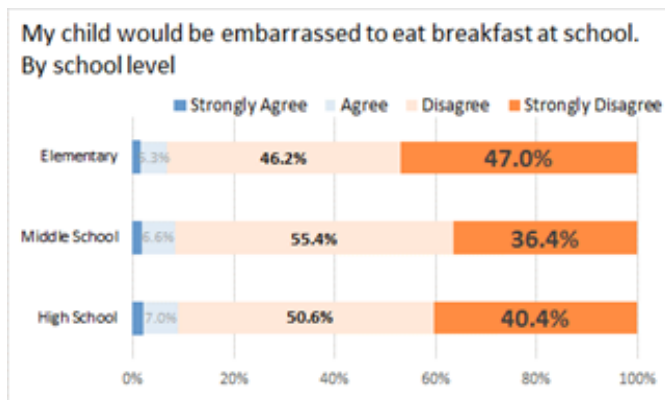
Some staff members believe social stigmas around school breakfast persist, i.e. that school breakfast is only for poor students. Others believe the effects of stigma are improving, especially when school breakfast is free to every student in the school regardless of income. Of the staff members who believe social stigma persist, most feel that the effects of stigma are greater for older students compared to younger students.

“[School breakfast] is free to every student in the school regardless of their income so you’ve taken away that stigma that only the poor kids eat breakfast at school.”

Indeed, our data reveals that a very small percent (7.8%) of survey respondents believed that their child would feel embarrassed to eat breakfast in school. The Department may wish to conduct research of the students themselves to see if this parental perception is indeed true and if social stigmas persist among the student population, especially in schools that do not have free breakfast to all students.

SOCIAL STIGMA BY GRADE LEVEL

Elementary school parents are more likely to strongly disagree that their child would be embarrassed to eat breakfast at school (47%) compared to middle school and high school parents (36.4% and 40.4% respectively).



MESSAGING TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION

DEVELOPING MESSAGES FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT ON SBP PARTICIPATION

The statistical procedure of multiple regression is a way to examine the relative impact of a number of variables on a single outcome. The question “how often does your child eat breakfast at school?” was used as the outcome variable used for the multiple regression analysis. In the analysis, each contributing variable is examined for its singular ability to predict the outcome variable, independently of the interrelationships between the other contributing variables in the analysis. The standardized beta is an indication of each individual variable’s strength as a predictor, with values from negative one to positive one. A value of zero indicates there is no relationship. As beta approaches negative one it indicates a strong, inverse relationship and as it approaches positive one, it indicates a strong, direct relationship.

As shown in the table below, the two greatest predictors of how frequently a child participates in the SBP are the measures of agreement with “My child likes to eat breakfast at home” and “My child likes to eat breakfast at school so he or she can spend time with friends.” Thus, increasing participation in the program must not only focus on providing information to parents, but should also include informing children, especially at the middle and high school levels, so that they express interest to their parent or guardian.

The belief that “having breakfast at school is too expensive” has a negative impact on SBP participation, as does the belief that “my child chooses to socialize or play with friends instead of eating school breakfast.”

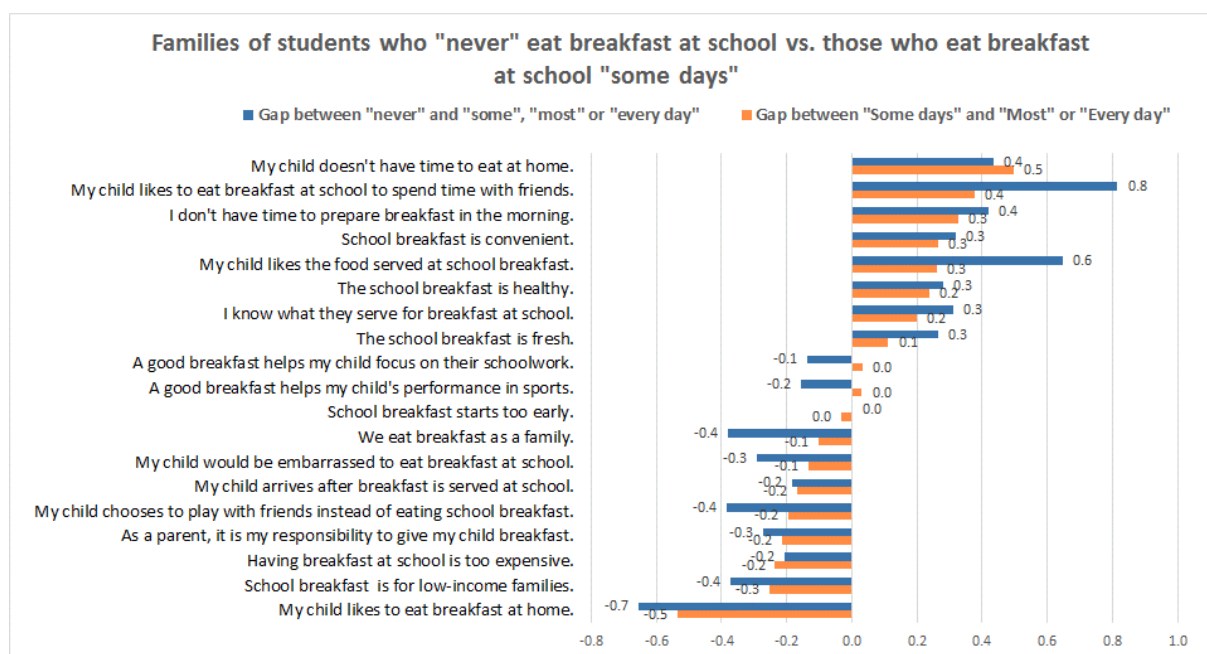
The fifth regression variable “My child likes the food served at school breakfast” further emphasizes the importance of the child’s preference in the parental decision of whether or not to participate in the program. Lastly, the parents’ perceptions of the importance of providing “breakfast to all students regardless of income” is strongly related to the indicators associated with the parental responsibility factor that emerged through factor analysis. The belief that breakfast is either a parental or school/social responsibility either inhibits or expands a families’ SBP participation. As these beliefs tend to be deeply held, the SBP may want to maneuver around them rather than confront or try to change perceptions about broad and deeply held convictions regarding parental responsibility and social obligation.

Predictor	Standardized Beta	Significance Level
1. My child likes to eat breakfast at home.	-.365	<.001
2. My child likes to eat breakfast at school so he or she can spend time with friends.	.249	<.001
3. Having breakfast at school is too expensive.	-.187	<.001
4. My child chooses to socialize or play with friends instead of eating school breakfast.	-.159	<.001
5. My child likes the food served at school breakfast.	.147	.001
6. Importance of breakfast being served to all students regardless of income	.099	.009

TARGETING FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPATION

Perceptions of the SBP vary by the families' level of current participation. Based on the survey results, families' whose child never participates in the SBP are less likely to be moved by messages as compared to those who participate on "some days". Thus, the effort to increase participation may have the greatest effect by focusing on increasing participation from some days to most or every day, rather than attempting to convert the never-participates to some days.

The chart below shows the gaps between the responses of those who report their child never participates in the SBP and those who participate on some, most or every day in blue. The orange bars show the differences between those whose child participates on some days and those who participate most or every day. On almost every variable, differences in perceptions related to the SBP are much greater for the "nevers" than the "somes", often by a factor of two or more.



BEST-PRACTICE MESSAGES

In a national survey of school nutrition directors, the School Meal Approaches, Resources, and Trends (SMART) Study, a joint initiative of The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, found that most SFA directors employ a combination of communication strategies that include displaying posters and signs in the cafeteria, providing nutrition education messages on the food service website or posted menus and inviting family members to join students for school meals².

The current research suggests similar approaches to those in the SMART Study. Displaying signs and posters in the cafeteria is an action directed at student perceptions of the program; the most impactful of the messages in the SBP survey were those regarding parental perceptions of the students'

² School Meal Programs Innovate to Improve Student Nutrition, A report from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, December 2016

preferences.

Nutrition education messages on the website and posted menus address feedback gained through intercept interviews. Parents said they wanted more information about the breakfast menus. The survey also shows the importance of knowledge and comfort variables such as freshness and nutritional value which could be included with the menus. Spoke to parents of school-age children ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade.

The majority of parents said in the intercept interviews that they prefer to receive information from the school through email. Materials brought home by the child in their backpack was the second most commonly preferred method. Text, phone calls and social media were mentioned less frequently. Only a handful stated that they preferred information that is sent by mail.

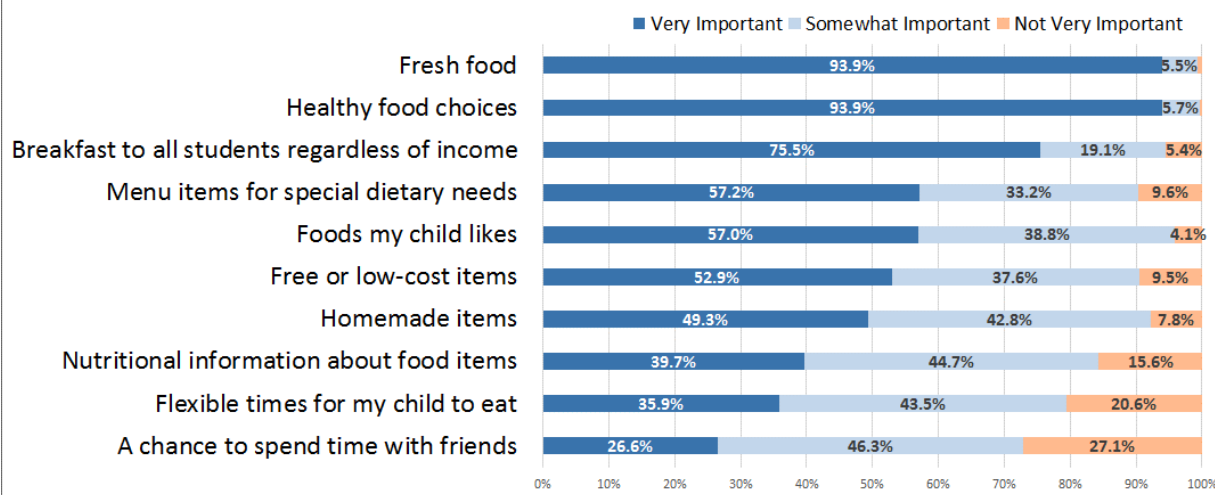
Inviting family members to join students for occasional school meals may help to show parents' that their child likes the food and enjoys the time spent socializing with friends. Further, inviting family members to share in breakfast may increase their understanding of the program and how it fulfills the ideals of a good breakfast: enhancing academic and sports performance and building on - not conflicting with - beliefs about family togetherness and parental responsibilities.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

PARENT PERCEPTIONS: IMPORTANCE RATINGS

Parents rated fresh food and healthy food choices as being most important, followed by the ideal of serving breakfast to all students regardless of income. Flexible times and a chance to spend time with friends were rated as being less important.

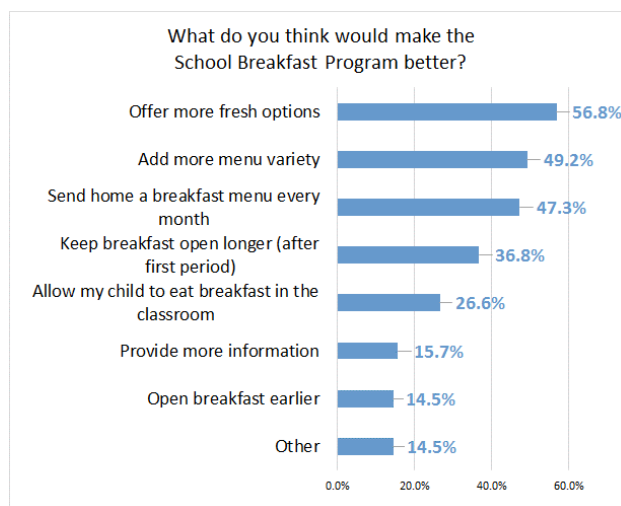
Should your child have breakfast at school? How important is it that the School Breakfast Program offers...



PARENT PERCEPTIONS: IMPROVING THE PROGRAM

A vast majority of intercept respondents stated that they want more information about the breakfast menu offered. Many respondents also said they want more information about the nutritional value of the menu offerings.

Over half (56.8%) of survey respondents said that offering more fresh options would make the school breakfast program better. About half suggested that the school add more menu variety as well as send home a breakfast menu every month (49.2% and 47.3% respectively). A little more than one in three (36.8%) suggested that the school should keep breakfast open longer (after first period) and one in seven (14.5%) said breakfast should open earlier. A quarter (26.6%) suggested that the school allow their child to eat breakfast in the classroom. About one in six (15.7%) would like the school to provide more information about the school breakfast program.



A word cloud is a graphic that summarizes open-ended, verbatim comments. The larger the number of times a word was mentioned, the larger it appears in print.

The word cloud below shows the write-in responses to the “other” section of the survey when asked about program improvements. “School breakfast program” are highlighted in the comments due to the subject of the survey. Options, choices, and free are a few themes that emerge from the graphic. Nutrition and health is another theme evident in the word cloud as seen by words such as sugar, healthier, protein, and prepackaged.

A list of verbatim comments as written on the survey by the respondent is provided in the Appendix.



STAFF PERCEPTIONS: WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO TO IMPROVE PARTICIPATION

Several themes emerged when we talked with staff members about what the individual school can do to help improve participation. These include:

1. Teacher and Administration Support
2. Alter or Add Other Service Delivery Methods
3. Improve Communication

TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT

Many staff members said that more support from the administration and teachers would help increase participation. Several talked about the importance of teacher participation, as well as genuine buy-in from the school administration. One emphasized how a robust food service program with favorable participation rates translates to higher free and reduced rates, allowing the school to be eligible for more grants and subsidies. This staff member stressed how a high functioning food service program benefits the whole organization.

“I’d like to have more teachers participate. The more that our students can see adults investing, the more they tend to invest. The more adults that children see participating in anything is beneficial because they see it as legitimate.”

Similarly, many staff members also noted that allowing students to eat breakfast in the classroom would help improve participation; however, several noted resistance of teachers to allow students to eat in their classroom. Staff members explained the challenges to teacher support, which include perceptions that food in the classroom is seen as disruptive, messy and takes away from their instruction time.

ALTER OR ADD SERVICE DELIVERY METHOD

Several staff members talked about altering or adding other service delivery methods, including breakfast in the classroom. Some suggestions include offering extended hours for breakfast in the cafeteria so students do not feel as rushed, or adding a breakfast cart that goes around to individual classrooms after the first period bell.

Similarly, a few talked about the importance of offering healthy foods and having food that is attractive to the students. One staff member stressed that each school needs to think of students as customers and determine who the competition is for that meal. One staff member also emphasized the need to stop offering students the choice between playing on the playground and eating breakfast.

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

Several staff members talked about additional advertising the schools could do such as more announcements about school breakfast and what’s being offered, additional signage or posters around the school, more promotion on social media or the school website, more promotion by the school district out in the community, and advertising the program on T.V.

Additionally, a few noted that holding more special events or challenges around the school breakfast program would help to promote the program. One staff member emphasized the importance of nutrition education inside and out of the classroom.

STAFF PERCEPTIONS: HOW MAINE DOE CAN HELP SCHOOLS IMPROVE PARTICIPATION

Several themes emerged when we talked with staff members about what the Maine Department of Education (DOE) can do to help schools improve participation. These include:

1. Information Materials and Marketing Campaigns
2. Greater Support and Engagement
3. Timing and Logistics
4. Secure Additional Funding
5. Trainings and Success Stories

INFORMATION MATERIALS AND MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Many staff members said that DOE could provide more informational materials and marketing campaigns. They said that DOE could coordinate T.V. commercials to promote the program, provide schools with marketing materials and posters, and could promote the program on social media.

GREATER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT

Many talked about greater support and engagement by DOE staff, especially management staff, which would filter down to the school districts, administration and teachers to help build support of the school breakfast program internally. DOE can help educate administration and staff members about hunger and the benefits of providing breakfast, such as improved behavior, focus and concentration.

TIMING AND LOGISTICS

Numerous staff members also emphasized the need for more time in the mornings to allow students to eat breakfast, as well as the need for allowing food in the classroom.

SECURE ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Several noted that DOE could try to secure additional funding for the breakfast program, especially for equipment. They suggested that DOE could lobby the State legislature to request additional funding. A few stated that DOE should support free or universal breakfast for all students, and again emphasized the need for DOE to lobby the State legislature to support free or universal breakfast.

"I really feel that until it is mandated that there is a set time for breakfast, how long it's going to be and the importance of that in the education of the students. Until that comes from the top, it's going to be a hard, hard battle to increase participation."

TRAININGS AND SUCCESS STORIES

"I think the State could look at each individual school and see what their policies are, how they go about [the school breakfast program], and how to make it better."

A few staff members talked about DOE sponsored training on how to do the breakfast program well or information on best practices so schools can see what is working well in other areas. One staff member stressed the importance of training schools so that they have good recipes that are homemade, as well as the importance of attractive food placement such as fruit at the beginning of the line. A few talked about how important it was for DOE to share success stories from other schools.

SUPPORT FOR THE SBP

Many staff members expressed their satisfaction with the support they get from DOE, especially Child Nutrition Services. They emphasized the importance of the program, for healthy food choices and the importance of customer service.

“It makes a difference in kids learning. I have been in the same district for 27 years and when our food went to the healthier options, kids’ performance, their attention, their ability to focus, their ability to settle down: it all improved. I see the difference in their readiness to learn.”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

AWARENESS OF THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

In general, parents are aware that breakfast is served at school; however, they may not be aware of details regarding school breakfast such as where and when students eat or how much breakfast at school costs. These details may not have as strong an impact on the decision to participate as factors such as how much the student likes the food or wants to participate, but may help to increase parents' comfort with the program and how it is administered.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

- ❖ **Ideals of Family Breakfast** – The vast majority of parents understand that a good breakfast benefits their child both academically and physically. One barrier to participation in the SBP is the idea that providing this good breakfast is a parental responsibility. Some parents have the goal of eating breakfast as a family, especially at the elementary school level.
- ❖ **Knowledge and Comfort** – Our research also reveals that parental knowledge and comfort of the SBP diminishes by school level. Parents of high school students are less likely to say that the school breakfast food is fresh and healthy, and that their child likes the food served. The feeling that school breakfast is convenient also diminishes slightly at the high school level where participation levels also decline.
- ❖ **Diminished Social Stigma** – It appears that offering free meals to all students regardless of income has helped to lessen the stigma associated with school breakfast. Indeed, our data reveals that a very small percent (7.8%) of survey respondents believed that their child would feel embarrassed to eat breakfast at school. The Department may wish to conduct research of the students themselves to see if this parental perception holds true and if social stigmas persist among the student population, especially in schools that do not offer free breakfast to all of their students.

MESSAGING TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION

Many of the most impactful messages focus on the preference of the student. An important component of message development is increasing the appeal of the SBP to students themselves.

Parent perceptions of the importance of providing breakfast as a parental responsibility are inversely related to SBP participation. Rather than contradict these ideals, the SBP may wish to frame the program as a way of fulfilling this responsibility and enhancing family relationships by including parents and/or teachers in occasional breakfast activities.

The types of messages that will have most impact on participation vary by grade level. At the elementary school level, parental responsibility ideals play a larger role. For high school students, food quality, convenience and the opportunity to socialize may be more impactful.

Students who eat breakfast at school some days may be more amenable to increasing participation than those who never eat breakfast at school. Targeting students who eat breakfast on at least some days to increase their participation to most or every day may have a better outcome than efforts to influence

students who have never participated in the SBP.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

- ❖ **Fresh and Healthy Options** – A vast majority of parents said it was very important that the SBP offer fresh food and healthy choices. Over half of the survey respondents said that offering more fresh options would make the SBP better. Parents suggested schools add more menu variety and that the school should send a breakfast menu home every month.
- ❖ **Timing and Logistics**- Staff members and some parents discussed improving logistics such as increasing the time students have to eat breakfast so that they do not have to choose between breakfast and socializing. Additionally, allowing children to eat breakfast in the classroom with other service delivery methods may address this issue.
- ❖ **Support and Engagement**- Many staff members discussed the need to improve support and engagement in the SBP. This support includes increased teacher participation (e.g., eating breakfast with students), offering universal breakfast at all schools and training to help schools improve their SBP participation through sharing best practices.

FURTHER RESEARCH

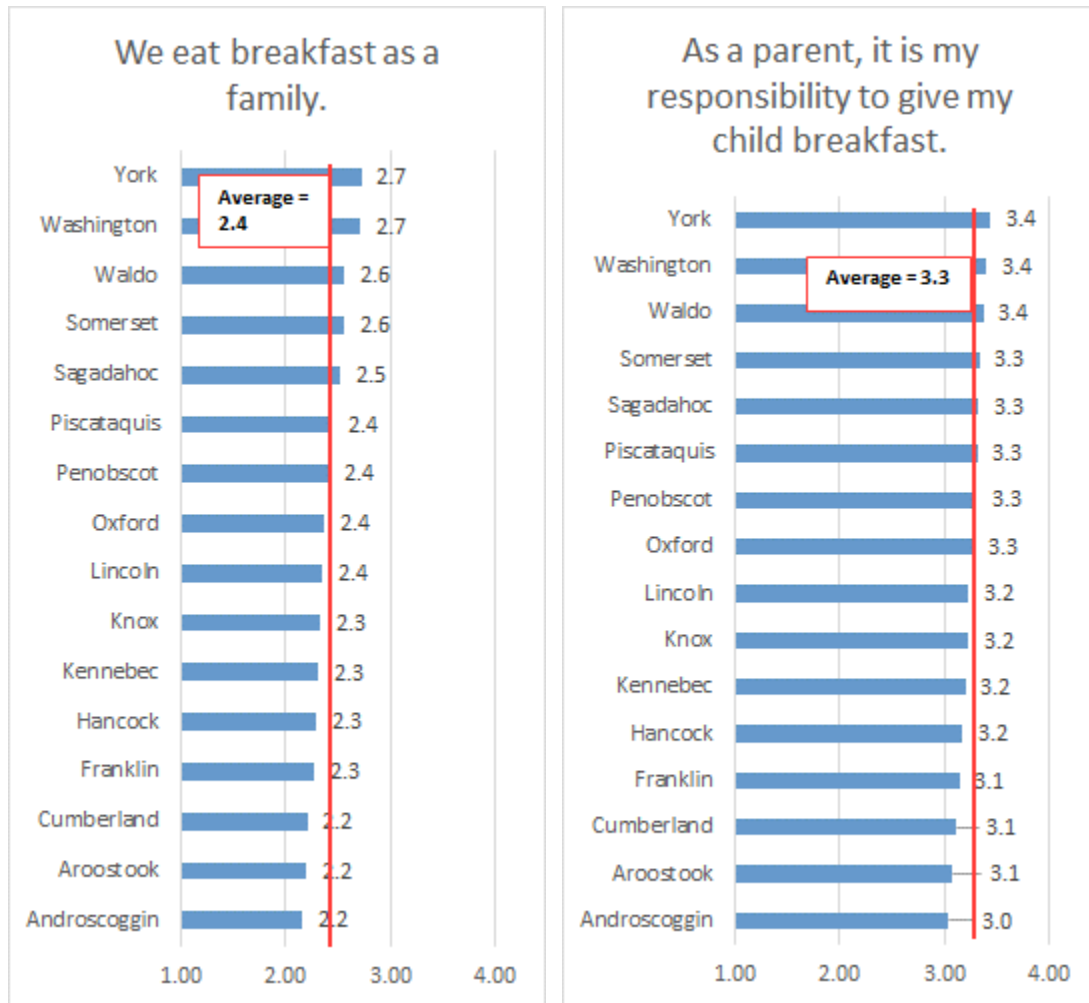
This research suggests that the type of food service offered by the school has a large impact on participation in the SBP. Data linking participation rates to the type of service offered at each school would yield important information about the effectiveness of delivery methods. Staff members expressed their desire to receive information on best practices and how they can improve participation in their program. Detailed data are available on participation rates by school, however without knowing what service delivery methods, policies and marketing strategies are implemented at each school, these data have unrealized potential.

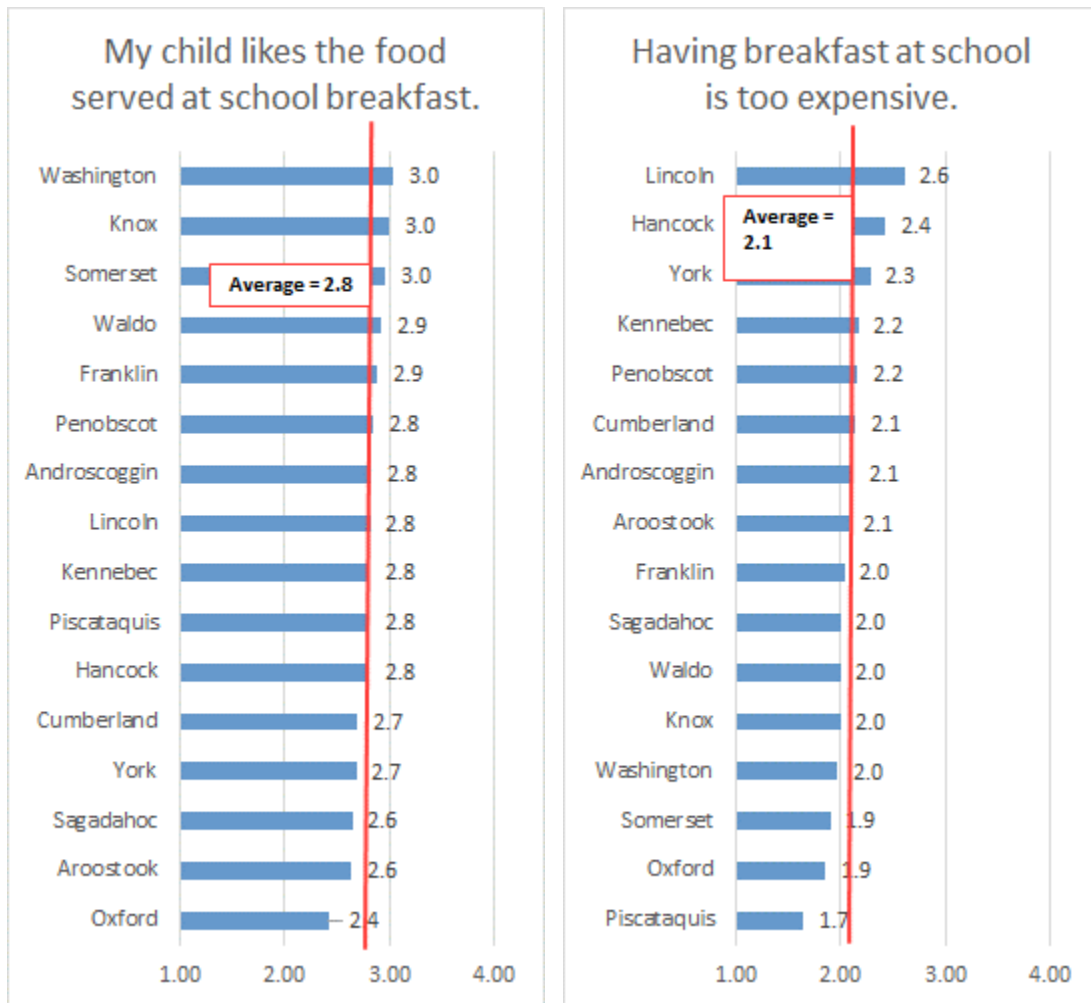
APPENDICES

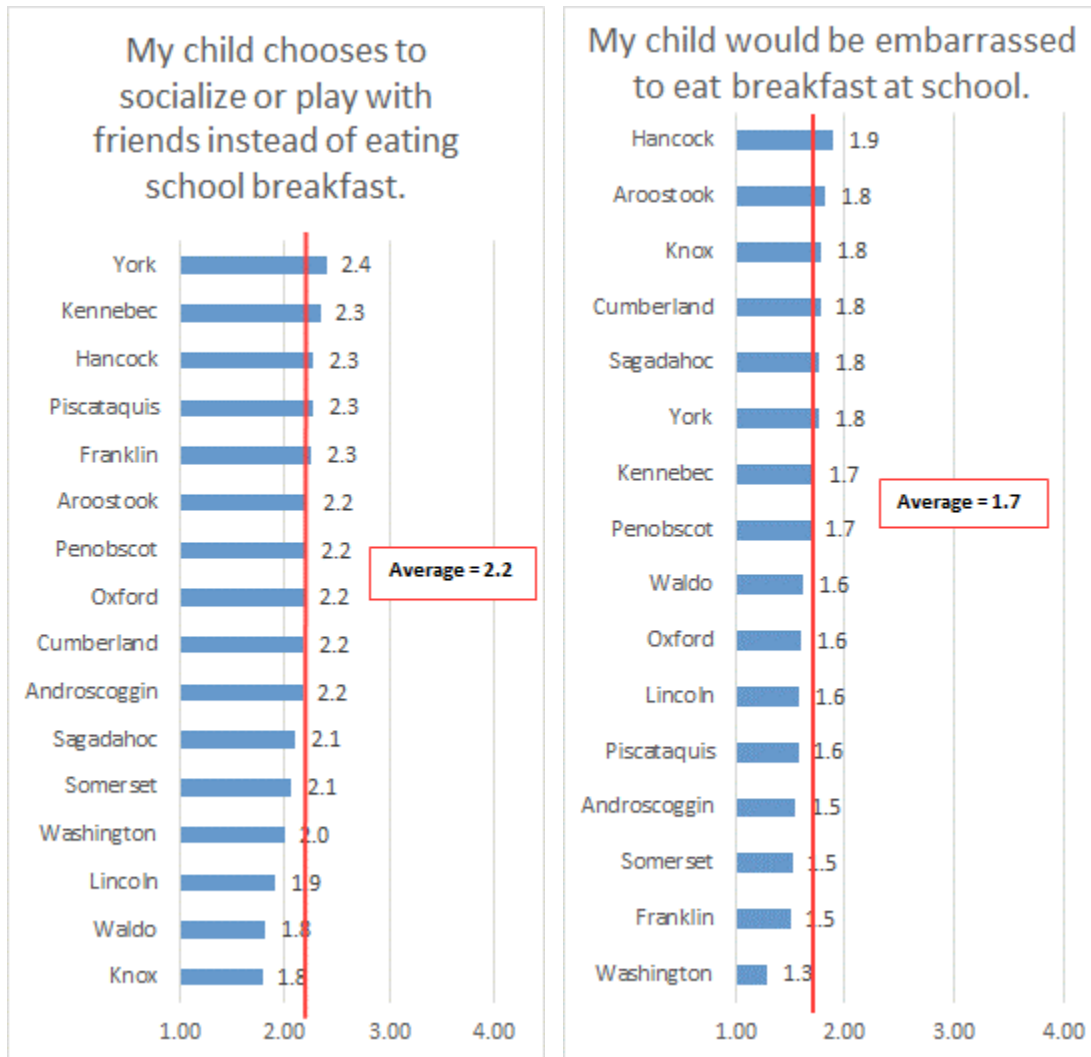
- 1. RESULTS BY COUNTY**
- 2. COMMENTS**
- 3. METHODOLOGY**
- 4. STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE**
- 5. INTERCEPT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**
- 6. MAIL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

APPENDIX 1: RESULTS BY COUNTY

This section shows the survey results by county for those variables that have statistically significant (.05 or less) differences by county. The statewide average is shown in red.







APPENDIX 2: COMMENTS

NUTRITION AND HEALTH

❖ A nutrition display which is changed often would be nice. Not just reading material but objects like for example bags of sugar showing the amounts in the foods.
❖ More homemade fresh items, less pre-packaged & more variety.
❖ Less pre-packaged, sugary options. More protein.
❖ I think that all meals served should be better quality because quite frankly my child complains about how bad the lunch is practically every day. She doesn't want to eat there because it's gross!
❖ Healthier! The breakfast is full of sugar!! Bad for learning.
❖ Limit sugared items, unnatural and fatty foods.
❖ Healthier options.
❖ Should not have pre-packaged items and should always include a protein source, ours does not.
❖ Most options are quite small and not filling for my child.
❖ More nutritious options instead of muffins and pancakes.
❖ Fresh fruit
❖ More protein options, less bakery items.
❖ Protein and fresh fruit are key ingredients. French toast sticks with fake maple (corn syrup) syrup is not - NO corn syrup, preservatives or colors!
❖ Offer cereal and milk, toast and eggs, quick and simple. My kids eat the same thing every day at home. Nothing from a plastic wrapped bag. No muffins, bars, etc.
❖ Everything doesn't have to be whole wheat. Tasting good is important too! Better eggs!
❖ Make them taste better.
❖ Less sugary options.
❖ Less sugary convenience foods. I don't want my children eating sugary cereals or pastries - I'd rather they didn't eat than ate that.
❖ More protein less frozen items.
❖ Lower sugar content, more complex carbohydrates, no juice drinks.
❖ Better tasting options.
❖ Quit serving sugar filled cereal!
❖ Fresh / homemade options.
❖ Remove high sugar options to encourage health choices. Despite the availability of healthy choices, if the other stuff is an option, my child may choose it. PARENT choice of menu options would be great.
❖ Healthy choices / not just sugary carbs.

❖ Possibly survey the children on healthy food choices the school could provide. For both breakfast and lunch.
❖ Vegetarian, whole food options. No processed or packaged junk.
❖ Offer healthier options - less sugar, more fruit and protein.
❖ Healthier foods that are not packaged. Ex: cinnamon buns, poptarts, etc.
❖ Stop providing sugary cereals and processed/wrapped in plastic options. Dirty dozen foods should be organize and there should be no sugar and as little processed foods as possible.
❖ Keep unhealthy options off the menu. Parents can't or have little control over what children eat when they are offered all the options. I only allow my child to eat hot lunch X2 per week at school and 0 breakfasts due to the unhealthy options served. (Unhealthy items = high saturated fat content and high sugar content.)
❖ Choices of plain yogurt or yogurt bar...
❖ Offer healthier options - not all processed junk.
❖ Stop giving kids sugar crap with no nutritional value. Also offer almond soy or coconut milk. Kids need protein options and whole grains.
❖ Higher quality ingredients.
❖ Less sugar - fruit juice should NOT count as a serving of fruit, it's just sugar
❖ Remove very sweet items such as honey buns
❖ Offer healthier choices and lunch choices also need to be healthier as well!
❖ Most items are carbs with minimal to no protein. Not a good example for kids who don't get good nutrition at home. I.E. French toast sticks, honey buns, pre-packaged pancakes.
❖ Healthy breakfast as compared to breakfast pizza, etc.
❖ Healthier choices of food/breakfast.
❖ I would like to see more fruit foods, less pre-heated food.
❖ My child has allergies so his options are limited (dairy and egg free items)
❖ No more honey buns! Huge calorie bombs! Don't offer pizza for breakfast when it's for lunch too.
❖ Offer juice or non-dairy milk.
❖ School breakfast could have less sugary foods - fruit/yogurt parfaits, low sugar cereal, even veggies!
❖ I wish they offered smoothies and more fresh options.
❖ More choices besides cereal and frozen items.
❖ Larger portions for high school kids.
❖ Offer allergen friendly substitutes.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERCEPTIONS

❖ Be more affordable.
❖ Less cost to family incomes.

❖ Sometimes [use program] if needed. Breakfast is so important and I think school breakfast and lunch should always be available for free to all students no matter parent's income. Because some parents may not provide money for child to eat at school and not feeding the child before school at home either!?! Just in case!! A hungry child = A SAD & cranky child.
❖ Make it free to all children.
❖ Offer breakfast free to all students so the free/reduced students do not feel judged by getting breakfast after breakfast in the classroom.
❖ Make it available free to all students.
❖ Same cost for everyone.
❖ Market if open to all? Traditionally I think it's only been available to low-income in our district?
❖ I don't know many details about this program... but it should be offered to ALL students regardless of income.
❖ Cheaper.
❖ Free breakfast for everyone.
❖ Lower the prices. It gets very expensive and just because people don't meet the criteria some still can't afford to buy breakfast and lunch for their kiddos. You people don't know the living expenses of families. Just because they put down their income they may have other expenses. If I was to pay lunch and breakfast for all 3 of my kids it would cost me around \$1500 a school year! I don't think it should be free but wow it is a lot. So we take turns of making and buying for each of them. I've tried for help no one cares.
❖ Make breakfast free to all students.
❖ Lower cost option.
❖ I can't really afford to have my children eat at school.
❖ Post breakfast online. Make it social and healthy so that it is comfortable for students of any/all socioeconomic groups.
❖ We can't afford it.
❖ Free breakfast for all students.
❖ Make it available before school through 2nd period so students with low income can get it without feeling bad. Provide items kids can grab, take with them, like bars, apples, etc. My child goes to private school. The café is open 7 to 7:45am daily. Students pay for food but they should offer free to subsidized families. Every child should have breakfast without paying or being embarrassed if it is free!
❖ Free to all kids. Many mid-income can't afford and don't qualify.
❖ Offer discounted breakfast/lunch to families with one or more children in school.
❖ Free lunch/breakfast for all children.
❖ Have breakfast free for every child.
❖ Make breakfast free.
❖ Options should be available to families who do not meet low-income free food program who may experience unexpected medical cost, car repair, etc.

❖ While our family does not qualify for low income meals I do feel it is important to offer them to those who need it. I just wish we didn't have to pay more. We are charged almost \$5.00 for lunch which might consist of 3 chicken nuggets and a scoop of peas! For \$4.75!! That's crazy. I wouldn't mind if it were a healthy meal but out of 30 days month my child may choose school meal 1-2 X. This month there was not one meal between breakfast or lunch he would eat.
❖ Free to all students regardless of income.

TIMING AND LOGISTICS

❖ Serve breakfast all day.
❖ Breakfast is served during a recess period usually and my child often chooses recess over breakfast because he wants to play with his friends. Later breakfast would help.
❖ Breakfast should be served but schools are NOT restaurants. A main option & a few a la carte choices should be enough.
❖ Playground or breakfast in K-6 always playground. Now full price too much. Make just a few \$ for help.
❖ Allow time to eat ALL school meals.
❖ Have breakfast available until after lunch is served. "Brunch" is not a bad thing. (choice)
❖ Have options instead of one choice.
❖ There is no school breakfast at our school currently.
❖ The breakfast served is convenient and when we are running behind we utilize this resource. The cereal served is sugar - frosted flakes, fruit loops. Nutrigrain bars - the 4 oz. juices are pure sugar. I wish water was an option for kids.
❖ Offer choices for children with food allergies without it being "too much to ask" Hire cafeteria workers who are happy and eager to work with kids.
❖ Add an option of made to order (hot) options once or twice monthly is a nice way for more parents/volunteers to be included in breakfast!
❖ My son gets it if he is running late - my oldest.
❖ School schedule allowing more time for breakfast.
❖ Morning break options (keep breakfast open longer). Pleased with our school program.
❖ From the kids - more options :)
❖ Stop serving the same thing on a weekly basis.
❖ Give more time for breakfast to be served. My kids say they only have approx. 5 minutes to eat before heading to class:(they need to wolf it down and sometimes can't in time.
❖ Online menu if not already, affordable, healthy.
❖ I encourage my daughter to get the grab n go breakfast offered at school but she doesn't. I would like for teachers to be better advocates of the breakfast program.

She eats at home around 6:30am but a small anything right around 8:45 - 9:00am would really benefit her.
❖ My children seem satisfied with breakfast now that they are given time to eat. This was an issue previously.
❖ Promotion to parents.
❖ My son has an IEP plan for Asperger's and severe social anxiety - he has a schedule of classes to accommodate and arrives later but is not allowed to eat during his "first" period which is second - he ends up going without until lunch because he physically can't eat until about 9:00 am.
❖ Washburn High School runs out of food so children do not get breakfast. Please check into this!

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

❖ Eat breakfast at home (with the family).
❖ Children should eat breakfast at home.
❖ Encourage parental responsibility.
❖ My children have never had breakfast at school. I make sure they have something before they go!
❖ My child eats breakfast at home.
❖ I prefer to feed my child at home. I like to know what he eats and how much.
❖ My children eat breakfast at home.
❖ I think breakfast should only be served with parent knowledge. My son often ate breakfast at home and a school (carb and sugar heavy) which contributed to unhealthy unneeded calories.
❖ Encourage eating breakfast @ home - most already receive SNAP benefits.
❖ I strongly believe that meals are a parent's responsibility to provide and that by depriving a parent of that responsibility the school/government is doing nothing to solve a perceived problem but is in fact creating an atmosphere that weakens the family unit with its innate connectedness and natural accountability. School breakfast creates problems.

POSITIVE COMMENTS ABOUT THE SBP

❖ I think the breakfast program is fine the way it is
❖ I am grateful to have this program
❖ is fine as is
❖ Nothing - the program is fine - we all eat breakfast @ home as a family.
❖ My child eats at home so the program is just fine based on my knowledge of the program.
❖ Nothing. Monmouth does an awesome job.
❖ Is fine the way it is.

❖ No idea. I believe this is an important and valuable program but we've had no occasion to use it.
❖ Windham has a great offering for breakfast. My child eats at home. Menu is offered every month.
❖ Many of these options are part of my child's program already.
❖ Nothing, I think they do a great job.
❖ Nothing :)
❖ I think our school does all this - love the program.
❖ All is well!
❖ I think the breakfast program is great. Thank you!
❖ Nothing
❖ Nothing - seems good.
❖ Great program. We just choose to eat at home.
❖ Everyone have breakfast in cafeteria much like lunch, it's a time everyone meets in one place to eat
❖ Breakfast and lunch program is wonderful.
❖ My child's school already does a great job!
❖ I think school does great job with {illegible} for food. Nothing needs to change.
❖ Our school does a great job with their breakfast program!

NEGATIVE COMMENTS ABOUT THE SBP

❖ Not needed.
❖ Move our school food away from government subsidy crap. School nutrition should be about good, healthy food not making a profit!
❖ I don't think breakfast at school is necessary
❖ Actually serve breakfast!

NO KNOWLEDGE OF SBP

❖ I don't have enough knowledge of the program to offer any advice.
❖ Not familiar - child does not eat @ school.
❖ Don't know - we don't use the program.
❖ My child hasn't eaten school breakfast before so I do not know much about the options, quality or changes the program needs.
❖ Don't know what's offered now.
❖ Not sure, don't know their menu now. I'm sure it's adequate.
❖ I don't know anything about the program.
❖ My school does not even provide it as far as I know. My daughter and husband and I moved last year. She always ate breakfast at the previous school.
❖ I don't know anything about the school breakfast program. My kids eat at home.

❖ I don't know anything about it.
❖ I don't use this program so I'm not sure what would make it better.
❖ My child has never utilized this program so can't comment.
❖ Not sure
❖ Unsure, we eat at home.
❖ We don't use program so can't answer.

APPENDIX 3: METHODOLOGY

In order to determine the effectiveness of strategies to increase student participation, the methodology gathered feedback from program staff at the school level, as well as both parents and students.

STAFF INTERVIEWS

AI conducted Interviews with a total of twenty-two (22) staff interviews including sixteen (16) Food Service/Nutrition Directors, one superintendent, one principle, one kitchen worker/administrative assistant, one school social worker, one health teacher and one school nurse. The length of time in their current position ranged from 14 days to over 28 years. These interviews focused on perceptions of barriers to participation in the school breakfast program, as well as potential solutions.

AI contacted superintendents in each of the sampled districts in order to obtain contact information for who best to talk with in their district regarding the school breakfast program. AI then contacted the superintendent's recommended person(s) for an interview.

Our team used purposeful sampling and interviews were conducted with staff members from all of Maine's counties, all school levels, and with a mixture of participation rates.

INTERCEPT INTERVIEWS

AI also conducted intercept interviews of parents, guardians and students at central locations for food shopping. These intercept interviews were conducted in lieu of focus groups and had several benefits. First, parents and parents with children participated where they are instead of being asked to attend a focus group at a later place and time. Second, we obtained interviews in both rural and urban locations. Finally, we were able to reach a larger and more diverse population by using this approach.

AI conducted ninety-two (92) Interviewees during the month of August at the following locations:

- ❖ Shaw's in Saco
- ❖ Farmer's Market in Lewiston
- ❖ County Yankee in Houlton
- ❖ Shaw's in Dover-Foxcroft
- ❖ Shaw's in Augusta
- ❖ Edmund's Market in Phillips

AI staff spoke to parents of school-age children ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade. A \$5.00 gift card to the local grocery store was provided to each person that completed an interview.

MAIL SURVEY DEPLOYMENT

A quantitative mail survey provided generalizable data to inform the research. The survey tested the relative impact of barriers to participation and a range of possible solutions.

A list of households with school-age children, proportional to the population of each county was purchased. . 7,447 survey packets were mailed, each with a survey, self-addressed and stamped return envelope and a raffle ticket to win a \$100 Hannaford gift card. 554 surveys were returned as undeliverable and 905 completed surveys were received, for a response rate of 13%.

APPENDIX 4: STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE

TEXT OF THE INITIAL EMAIL:

Hello,

Analytic Insight has contracted with the State of Maine Department of Education to conduct a study of the School Breakfast Program in order to improve participation in the program.

I am writing to schedule a time we can talk briefly about how the program is working at your school. I realize this is summer break, but it is very important we speak at your earliest convenience. The interview will take about 10-15 minutes by telephone and I will schedule it at your most convenient available time.

Please reply with the best times to reach you by telephone and the number you would like us to call. I will confirm the day and time by email, and give you a call then.

Thank you so much for your help improving participation in this important program!

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction:

Hello, I'm calling from Analytic Insight. We've contracted with the DOE to do a study on the school breakfast program. We have an appointment to speak. Is this still a convenient time?

I'm going to be recording our interview using a smart pen that links my notes to an audio recording. After the report is developed I will destroy the recording part of our conversation. Is it OK with you if I record this conversation?

Your interview will be combined with about 20 other staff interviews. We will not use your name or position in the school in any reporting or presentation. We report only what was said, not who said it.

1. First, could you tell me how the school breakfast program works in your school? (E.g., grab and go, late start?)
2. What are the reasons you think students participate?
3. What are the reasons you think students do not participate?
4. Get full answer, then probe for any of the following that were not mentioned spontaneously:
5. Social stigma
6. Timing with bus or drop off times
7. Quality of food/Nutritional value
8. Belief that breakfast is a parental responsibility
9. Are most students and their families aware of the program?

-
10. What has the school done to promote the program?
 11. What do you think the school could do better to promote it?
 12. How could the State of Maine Department of Education help schools improve participation?
 13. Is there anything else that we haven't discussed that you would like the DOE to know about the school breakfast program?

APPENDIX 5: INTERCEPT INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTRODUCTION AND QUALIFYING QUESTIONS

Hello, we are doing a study on behalf of the Department of Education about the School Breakfast Program. We are offering a five dollar gift card to (store) in exchange for about five minutes of your time to complete an interview. Is that something you'd be interested in? (If yes, continue. If no, thank and terminate.)

Do you have school age children? (If yes, continue. If no, thank and terminate.)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What grade(s) are your children in?
2. Have you heard of the School Breakfast Program?
 - a. IF YES:
 - i. Has your child/have your children ever had breakfast at school?
 - ii. How many times during the last school year?
 - iii. Are you familiar with "Grab and go?" "Breakfast in the classroom?"
 - iv. What kind of breakfast service do your children have at school?
 - v. What are the benefits of having your child eat breakfast at school?
 - b. IF NO:
 - i. What is your first thought when you hear school offers breakfast?
 - ii. Would you want your child/children to have breakfast at school?
 - iii. What are your reasons? (Probe for responsibility, timing, nutritional value)
 - iv. Do you think they would want to have breakfast at school?
 - v. What are their reasons? (Probe for stigma, responsibility, timing, nutritional value)
3. How do you like to get information from the school? (E.g. email, text, backpack)
4. What kinds of information would like to get about the school breakfast?

APPENDIX 6: MAIL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

About the School Breakfast Program Some Questions for You



Hello,

Do you have a child who attends school in Maine? If you do, please fill out the following survey and send it back to us with the raffle ticket for the chance to win a \$100 Hannaford gift-card!

The survey will ask you about the School Breakfast Program. If you have more than one child in school, please answer the survey questions based on your oldest child.

All of your responses will be kept confidential and the raffle ticket will be separated from the survey responses to ensure privacy. The raffle will take place September 30, 2017; if you win you will be notified shortly afterwards!

The Department of Education wants to know your opinion about the Maine School Breakfast Program. The information from this survey will help improve the meals your child receives.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Adriane Ackroyd, MPH, RD
Child Nutrition Services

Your Breakfast Routine

Q1	How often does your child eat breakfast...	Every Day	Most Days	Some days	Never
	At home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	At school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	At home and school on the same day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	On the way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	At a fast food restaurant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	At a restaurant (not fast food)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	From a convenience store on the way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does not eat breakfast.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

About School Breakfast

Q2 Where is breakfast served at your child's school? (Please check all that apply.)

- ☐ In the cafeteria
 ☐ From a cart in the hallway
☐ In the classroom
 ☐ I don't know

Q3 When is breakfast served at your child's school? (Please check all that apply.)

- ☐ Before class
 ☐ Anytime
☐ During class
 ☐ I don't know

Q4 If a child arrives late to school does the school allow them to eat breakfast?

- ☐ Yes
 ☐ No
 ☐ I don't know

Q5 How much does breakfast cost at your child's school?

- ☐ Free
 ☐ Less than \$2.00
 ☐ \$2.00 or more
 ☐ I don't know

Your Thoughts

Q6 Do you agree or disagree?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The school breakfast is healthy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school breakfast is fresh.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School breakfast is convenient.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know what they serve for breakfast at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A good breakfast helps my child focus on their schoolwork.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A good breakfast helps my child's performance in sports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q7 Do you agree or disagree?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My child likes the food served at school breakfast.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child likes to eat breakfast at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child doesn't have time to eat at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child would be embarrassed to eat breakfast at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child likes to eat breakfast at school so he or she can spend time with friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child chooses to socialize or play with friends instead of eating school breakfast.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q8 Do you agree or disagree?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Having breakfast at school is too expensive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School breakfast is for low-income families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't have time to prepare breakfast in the morning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School breakfast starts too early.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As a parent, it is my responsibility to give my child breakfast.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We eat breakfast as a family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child arrives after breakfast is served at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

About Your Decision

Q9 Should your child have breakfast at school? How important is it that the School Breakfast Program offers...

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Nor Very Important
Healthy food choices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fresh food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homemade items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Menu items for special dietary needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foods my child likes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A chance to spend time with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Free or low-cost items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flexible times for my child to eat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nutritional information about food items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breakfast to all students regardless of income	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Improving the Program

Q10 What do you think would make the School Breakfast Program better? (Please check all that apply.)

- ☐ Offer more fresh options
- ☐ Add more menu variety
- ☐ Send home a breakfast menu every month
- ☐ Open breakfast earlier
- ☐ Keep breakfast open longer (after first period)
- ☐ Allow my child to eat breakfast in the classroom
- ☐ Provide more information
- ☐ Other:

About you

What grade is your oldest child in?

Q11

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Thank you for filling out this survey!

Please return the completed survey in the postage-paid envelope.

If you would like to enter the raffle for a \$100 Hannaford gift card, please complete and enclose your raffle ticket!

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

[illegible]